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THE STORY OF MARCO POLO

THE KHAN'S FLEET PASSING THROUGH THE INDIAN ARCHIPELAGO. *Frontispiece.*

THE STORY

OF

MARCO POLO

60893

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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PREFACE.

THE story of Marco Polo and his companions is one of the most romantic and interesting of mediæval or of modern times. The manner of the return of the Polos long after they had been given up for dead, the subsequent adventures of Marco Polo, the incredulity with which his book of travels was received, the gradual and slow confirmation of the truth of his reports as later explorations penetrated the mysterious Orient, and the fact that he may be justly regarded as the founder of the geography of Asia, have all combined to give to his narrative a certain fascination, with which no other story of travel has been invested. At first read for pure amusement, Marco Polo's book eventually became an authoritative account of regions of the earth, which were almost wholly unknown to Europe up to his time, and some portions of which even now remain unexplored by Western travellers.

In this little book the author and compiler has endeavoured to give a connected account of the travels of Marco Polo for the entertainment and instruction of young readers, with the hope that maturer minds may find therein a comprehensive and intelligible summary of the most valuable and trustworthy parts of the said book. As far as possible he has allowed the traveller to speak for himself, refraining from that fashion of condensation, which suppresses the original author and gives the reader only a narration, which has been coloured by its passage through the mind of an editor. In his comments on the text of Marco Polo, the author has made use of the erudite notes of Colonel Henry Yule, C.B., whose admirable translation of "The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian" (John Murray, London, 1871) has been made the basis of this volume. The works of the Abbé Huc, Williams's "The Middle Kingdom," Gilmour's "Among the Mongols," and other less-known books have been consulted in quest of light and information for the better understanding of the great Venetian's pages.

NOAH BROOKS.

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THE

STORY OF MARCO POLO.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING MARCO, HIS FATHER, AND HIS UNCLE—MISTY NOTIONS OF THE FAR EAST HELD BY MEN OF MEDIÆVAL TIMES—HOW THE POLOS WENT TO THE DOMINIONS OF KUBLAI KHAN AND GOT BACK AGAIN—A MARVELLOUS JOURNEY.

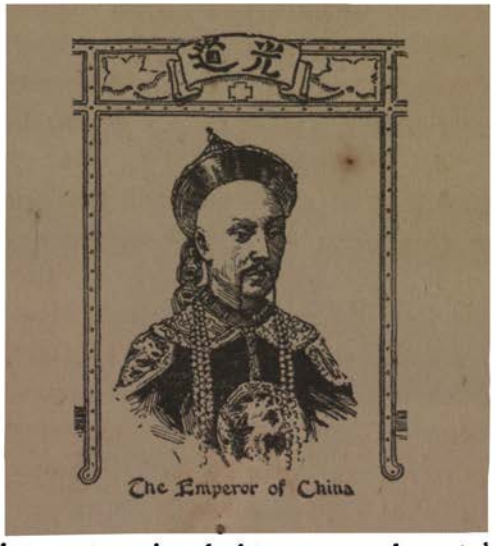
MANY hundred years ago, in the year 1295, let us say, before Columbus discovered America, or the art of printing had been invented, a strange thing happened in Venice. Three men, dressed in outlandish garb, partly European and partly Asiatic, appeared in the streets of that city, making their way to the gates of a lofty and handsome house which was then occupied by members of the ancient family of Polo. The three strangers, whose speech had a foreign accent, claimed admittance to the mansion, saying that they were Maffeo and Nicolo

Polo, brothers, and Marco, son of Nicolo, all of whom had been absent in the wild and barbarous countries of the Far East for more than twenty-four years, and had long since been given up as lost.

In those days nobody in Europe knew much about the regions in which the three Polos had travelled, the little that was known being derived from scanty and vague reports. Two friars, Plano Carpini and William Rubruquis, it is true, had reached the borders of Cathay, or Northern China, and had brought back slender accounts of the wonders of that mysterious land, of which they had heard from the subjects of the Great Khan, who reigned over a vast empire. But nobody among the learned and most travelled people of Europe knew exactly what manner of people lived, or what countries lay, beyond the western boundary of Cathay. None knew aught of the inhabitants (or if there were inhabitants) of the regions that we now know as India, Sumatra, Japan, Corea, and the eastern coasts of Asia and Africa. It was supposed that the farthest extreme, or eastern edge, of Cathay ran off into a region of continual darkness, a bog or marsh where all manner of strange beasts, hobgoblins, and monsters roamed and howled. And it was not surprising that, when the three Polos (for these were they) came back from that desperately savage country and claimed their own, they were laughed to scorn. It seemed reasonable to believe

that the three, having been gone so many years, had wandered off into the Sea of Darkness and had perished miserably, or had been destroyed by the wild creatures of that terrible region.

How the three Polos so far convinced their relations, who were in possession of the Polo mansion



The Emperor of China

in Venice, as to gain admittance, we do not know; but John Baptist Ramusio, who has written an entertaining history of the Polo family, sets forth what was done by the three Polos to prove that they were what they claimed to be, after they had taken possession of their house. They explained that they had been in the service of the Great Khan, or Emperor, of the Mongol Empire, and

that they had amassed wealth while in the region variously known as Cathay, China, Mongolia, and the Far East. Here is what the good John Baptist Ramusio has to tell of the device by which Maffeo, Nicolo, and young Marco Polo finally convinced their neighbours of the truth of their marvellous story:

They invited a number of their kindred to an entertainment, which they took care to have prepared with great state and splendour in that house of theirs; and when the hour arrived for sitting down to table, they came forth of their chamber, all three clothed in crimson satin, fashioned in long robes reaching to the ground, such as people in those days wore within doors. And when water for the hands had been served, and the guests were set, they took off those robes and put on others of crimson damask, whilst the first suits were by their orders cut up and divided among the servants. Then after partaking of some of the dishes, they went out again and came back in robes of crimson velvet; and when they had again taken their seats, the second suits were divided as before. When dinner was over, they did the like with the robes of velvet, after they had put on dresses of the ordinary fashion worn by the rest of the company. These proceedings caused much wonder and amazement among the guests. But when the cloth had been drawn, and all the servants had been ordered to retire from the dining-hall, Messer Marco, as the youngest of the three, rose from table, and, going into another chamber, brought forth the three shabby dresses of coarse stuff which they had worn when they first arrived. Straightway they took sharp knives and began to rip up some of the seams and welts, and to take out of them

jewels of the greatest value in vast quantities, such as rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, diamonds, and emeralds, which had all been stitched up in those dresses in so artful a fashion that nobody could have suspected the fact. For when they took leave of the Great Can, they had changed all the wealth that he had bestowed upon them into this mass of rubies, emeralds, and other jewels, being well aware of the impossibility of carrying with them so great an amount of gold over a journey of such extreme length and difficulty. Now this exhibition of such a huge treasure of jewels and precious stones, all tumbled out upon the table, threw the guests into fresh amazement, insomuch that they seemed quite bewildered and dumbfounded. And now they recognised that in spite of all former doubts these were in truth those honoured and worthy gentlemen of the Ca' Polo * that they claimed to be; and so all paid them the greatest honour and reverence. And when the story got wind in Venice, straightway the whole city, gentle and simple, flocked to the house to embrace them, and to make much of them, with every conceivable demonstration of affection and respect. On Messer Maffeo, who was the eldest, they conferred the honours of an office that was of great dignity in those days; whilst the young men came daily to visit and converse with the ever polite and gracious Messer Marco, and to ask him questions about Cathay and the Great Can, all of which he answered with such kindly courtesy that every man felt himself in a manner his debtor. And as it happened that in the story, which he was constantly called on to repeat, of the magnificence of the Great Can, he would speak of his revenues as amounting to ten or fifteen *millions* of gold, and in like manner, when recounting other instances of great wealth in those parts, would always make use of the term

* House of Polo.

millions, so they gave him the nickname of MESSER MARCO MILLIONI: a thing which I have noted also in the Public Books of this Republic where mention is made of him. The Court of his House, too, at S. Giovanni Chrisostomo, has always from that time been popularly known as the Court of the Millioni.

It is with the youngest of the three Polos that our story has to do; for Marco, the son of Nicolo, was the author of the book that bears his name; and he was the most famous traveller of his time, as we shall presently see. He was seventeen years old when he first started on his adventurous journey into Far Cathay. He was forty-one years old when he returned to his native city of Venice, with his father and his uncle Maffeo; and it was not until three or four years later, while he was a prisoner of war, that he began to write, or dictate, the tale of his wonderful travels.

The two Polo brothers, Nicolo and Maffeo, began their wanderings in the Far East before Marco was born. After several years of trading and travelling in that region of the world, which was called the Levant, because the sun was seen to rise there (from the French verb *lever*, to rise), the two Polos were in Constantinople in 1260. From that city they went on a trading venture round the northern shore of the Black Sea to the Crimea and the Sea of Azov, and thence into Western Asia and to Bokhara, where

they remained three years. While there, they heard distinct and trustworthy tales of the Great Khan, as he was called—the Emperor of the Mongols—and they resolved to go and see the splendours of his court.

At that time the Mongolian Empire was one of the largest, if not the largest, in the world. The Mongols, beginning their wandering life in the northern part of Asia, had overrun all the western part of that continent, and as far to the southward as the island of Sumatra, excepting India. To the eastward, the islands of Cipango, or Japan, alone resisted the dominion of the Great Khan; and in the west, his hordes had even broken over the borders of Europe, had taken possession of the country now known as Russia, had invaded Poland and Hungary, and had established themselves on the mouths of the Danube. During the reign of the great Jenghiz Khan and his immediate successors, it has been said, "In Asia and Eastern Europe scarcely a dog might bark without Mongol leave, from the borders of Poland and the coast of Cilicia to the Amur and the Yellow Sea."

When the two Polos arrived at the chief city of the Mongol Empire, Kublai Khan, a grandson of the great Jenghiz, was the reigning Sovereign. The Khan had never seen any Europeans, and he was greatly pleased with the appearance of the Polo

brothers. This is what Marco Polo says of the reception of his father and uncle by Kublai Khan:

When the Two Brothers got to the Great Kaan, he received them with great honour and hospitality, and showed much pleasure at their visit, asking them a great number of questions. First, he asked about the emperors, how they maintained their dignity and administered justice in their dominions, and how they went forth to battle, and so forth. And then he asked the like questions about the kings and princes and other potentates.

And then he inquired about the Pope and the Church, and about all that is done at Rome, and all the customs of the Latins. And the Two Brothers told him the truth in all its particulars, with order and good sense, like sensible men as they were; and this they were able to do, as they knew the Tartar language well.

When that Prince, whose name was CUBLAY KAAN, Lord of the Tartars all over the earth, and of all the kingdoms and provinces and territories of that vast quarter of the world, had heard all that the Brothers had to tell him about the ways of the Latins, he was greatly pleased, and he took it into his head that he would send them on an Embassy to the Pope. So he urgently desired them to undertake this mission along with one of his Barons; and they replied that they would gladly execute all his commands as those of their Sovereign Lord. Then the Prince sent to summon to his presence one of his Barons whose name was COGATAL, and desired him to get ready, for it was proposed to send him to the Pope along with the Two Brothers. The Baron replied that he would execute the Lord's commands to the best of his ability.

After this the Prince caused letters from himself to the Pope to be indited in the Tartar tongue, and committed them to the Two Brothers and to that Baron of his own,

THE POLO BROTHERS RECEIVING THE TABLET OF GOLD.

[*To face p.* 8.

and charged them with what he wished them to say to the Pope. Now the contents of the letter were to this purport: He begged that the Pope would send as many as an hundred persons of our Christian faith; intelligent men, acquainted with the Seven Arts, well qualified to enter into controversy, and able clearly to prove by force of argument to idolaters and other kinds of folk, that the Law of Christ was best, and that all other religions were false and naught; and if they would prove this, he and all under him would become Christians and the Church's liegemen. Finally he charged his Envoys to bring back to him some Oil of the Lamp which burns on the Sepulchre of our Lord at Jerusalem.

When the Prince had charged them with all his commission, he caused to be given them a Tablet of Gold, on which was inscribed that the three Ambassadors should be supplied with everything needful in all countries through which they should pass—with horses, with escorts, and, in short, with whatever they should require. And when they had made all needful preparations, the three Ambassadors took their leave of the Emperor and set out.

So great was the reverence in which the Great Khan was held by all who frequented his court that he was called the Lord, or the Lord of the Earth. Ramusio spells the title variously, sometimes "Kaan," and sometimes "Can." He also calls him "Cublay" at times, but most scholars give the name as Kublai. The Seven Arts which the Great Khan wanted to have brought to his court by teachers were: Rhetoric, Logic, Grammar, Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and Geometry. These

were then regarded as the sum of human knowledge; and if the people of the Great Khan were taught these, they would know all that the Europeans knew.

Everything went well with the travellers, except that the Tatar baron fell sick, and had to be left behind. They reached Acre in 1269, where, finding to their dismay that the Pope was dead, and that his successor had not been chosen, they went, says Marco Polo,

to a certain wise Churchman who was Legate for the whole kingdom of Egypt, and a man of great authority, by name Theobald of Piacenza, and told him of the mission on which they were come. When the Legate heard their story, he was greatly surprised, and deemed the thing to be of great honour and advantage for the whole of Christendom. So his answer to the Two Ambassador Brothers was this: "Gentlemen, ye see that the Pope is dead; wherefore ye must needs have patience until a new Pope be made, and then shall ye be able to execute your charge." Seeing well enough that what the Legate said was just, they observed: "But while the Pope is a-making, we may as well go to Venice and visit our households." So they departed from Acre and went to Negropont, and from Negropont they continued their voyage to Venice. On their arrival there, Messer Nicolas found that his wife was dead, and that she had left behind her a son of fifteen years of age, whose name was Marco; and 'tis of him this Book tells. The Two Brothers abode at Venice a couple of years, tarrying until a Pope should be made.

When the Two Brothers had tarried as long as I have told you, and saw that never a Pope was made, they said that their return to the Great Kaan must be put off no longer. So they set out from Venice, taking Marco along

with them, and went straight back to Acre, where they found the Legate of whom we have spoken. They had a good deal of discourse with him concerning the matter, and asked his permission to go to Jerusalem to get some Oil from the Lamp on the Sepulchre, to carry with them to the Great Kaan, as he had enjoined. The Legate giving them leave, they went from Acre to Jerusalem and got some of the Oil, and then returned to Acre, and went to the Legate and said to him: "As we see no sign of a Pope's being made, we desire to return to the Great Kaan; for we have already tarried long, and there has been more than enough delay." To which the Legate replied: "Since 'tis your wish to go back, I am well content." Wherefore he caused letters to be written for delivery to the Great Kaan, bearing testimony that the Two Brothers had come in all good faith to accomplish his charge, but that as there was no Pope they had been unable to do so.

Armed with these, the Polos started on their return; but they had not gone far when they were overjoyed to learn that their good friend, Archdeacon Tebaldo, had been chosen Pope. The news was sent after them, and they went back to Acre, where Tebaldo, afterwards known as Pope Gregory X., received them graciously; but he could supply them with only two priestly teachers, and these afterwards became so alarmed by the dangers of the way that they drew back. It is related that the Great Khan, in consequence of this failure to supply him with Christian teachers, resorted to Tibet, where he found holy men who brought for his unruly subjects instruction in the religion of Buddha.

CHAPTER II.

YOUNG MARCO AT THE COURT OF KUBLAI KHAN—THE GREAT KHAN'S CONDESCENSION TO THE YOUNG TRAVELLER—THE MANNER OF THE RETURN OF THE POLOS—HOW MESSER MARCO POLO WAS CAPTURED BY THE GENOESE, AND HOW HE WROTE HIS FAMOUS BOOK OF TRAVELS.

MARCO and his father and uncle were very cordially received when they reached the court of the Great Khan, which was then established at the imperial summer residence among the hills to the north of Cambaluc, or Peking. The palace was a vast group of buildings, and was known as the City of Peace, or Chandu: its other names were Kemenfu, Kaiminfu, and Kaipingfu. Here is young Marco's own account of the reception which the three Venetians had in the City of Peace:

And what shall I tell you? When the Two Brothers and Mark had arrived at that great city, they went to the Imperial Palace, and there they found the Sovereign attended by a great company of Barons. So they bent the knee before him, and paid their respects to him with all possible reverence, prostrating themselves on the ground. Then the Lord bade them stand up, and treated them

with great honour, showing great pleasure at their coming, and asked many questions as to their welfare and how they had sped. They replied that they had in verity sped well, seeing they had found the Kaan well and safe. Then they presented the credentials and letters which they had received from the Pope, which pleased him right well; and after that they produced the Oil from the Sepulchre, and at that also he was very glad, for he set great store thereby. And next, spying Mark, who was then a young gallant, he asked who was that in their company? "Sire," said his father, Messer Nicolo, "'tis my son and your liegeman." "Welcome is he too," quoth the Emperor. There was great rejoicing at the Court because of their arrival; and they met with attention and honour from everybody. So they abode at the Court with the other Barons.

Now it came to pass that Marco, the son of Messer Nicolo, sped wondrously in learning the customs of the Tartars as well as their language, their manner of writing, and their practice of war; in fact, he came in brief space to know several languages and four sundry written characters. And he was discreet and prudent in every way, insomuch that the Emperor held him in great esteem. And so when he discerned Mark to have so much sense, and to conduct himself so well and beseemingly, he sent him on an ambassage of his, to a country which was a good six months' journey distant. The young gallant executed his commission well and with discretion. Now he had taken note on several occasions that when the Prince's ambassadors returned from different parts of the world they were able to tell him about nothing except the business on which they had gone, and that the Prince in consequence held them for no better than fools and dolts, and would say, "I had far liever hearken about the strange things, and the manners of the different countries you have seen, than merely be told of the business you went upon"; for he took great

delight in hearing of the affairs of strange countries. Mark, therefore, as he went and returned, took great pains to learn about all kinds of different matters in the countries which he visited, in order to be able to tell about them to the Great Kaan.

When Mark returned from his ambassage, he presented himself before the Emperor; and after making his report of the business with which he was charged, and its successful accomplishment, he went on to give an account, in a pleasant and intelligent manner, of all the novelties and strange things that he had seen and heard; insomuch that the Emperor and all such as heard his story were surprised, and said: "If this young man live, he will assuredly come to be a person of great worth and ability." And so from that time forward he was always entitled MESSER MARCO POLO, and thus we shall style him henceforth in this Book of ours, as is but right.

Thereafter Messer Marco abode in the Kaan's employment some seventeen years, continually going and coming, hither and thither, on the missions that were entrusted to him by the Lord, and sometimes, with the permission and authority of the Great Kaan, on his own private affairs. And as he knew all the Sovereign's ways, like a sensible man he always took much pains to gather knowledge of anything that would be likely to interest him, and then on his return to Court he would relate everything in regular order, and thus the Emperor came to hold him in great love and favour. And for this reason also he would employ him the oftener on the most weighty and most distant of his missions. These Messer Marco ever carried out with discretion and success, God be thanked. So the Emperor became ever more partial to him, and treated him with the greater distinction, and kept him so close to his person that some of the Barons waxed very envious thereat. And thus it came about that Messer Marco Polo had

knowledge of, or had actually visited, a greater number of the different countries of the World than any other man; the more that he was always giving his mind to get knowledge, and to spy out and inquire into everything, in order to have matter to relate to the Lord.

It is pleasant to think of this bright young stranger in the court of Kublai Khan, winning friends for himself by his zeal in acquiring knowledge of the peoples and countries subject to the sway of the Khan. By his intelligence and agreeable manners he was able to command the means to explore countries which, even to this day, are very imperfectly understood by the rest of the world. Within the memory of men now living, European travellers have explored, for the first time since Marco Polo's visits, the Pamir steppes, other portions of Mongolia, Tibet, and some of the south-western provinces of China.

He was the first traveller to trace a route across the whole length of Asia, says one of his biographers, "describing kingdom after kingdom that he had seen with his own eyes." He was the first traveller to explore the deserts and the flowering plains of Persia, to reveal China with its mighty rivers, its swarming population, and its huge cities and rich manufactures; the first to visit and bring back accounts of Tibet, Laos, Burmah, Siam, Cochin China, Japan, the Indian Archipelago, Ceylon, Farther India,

and the Andaman Islands; the first to give any distinct account of the secluded Christian empire of Abyssinia; the first to speak even vaguely of Zanzibar, Madagascar, and other regions in the mysterious South, and of Siberia and the Arctic Ocean in the terrible and much dreaded North. Although centuries have passed since young Marco Polo grew to man's estate while threading his dangerous way among these distant lands, we must still look back to his discoveries for much that we know about those countries; for we have learned nothing new of many of them since his time.

Years passed while the three Polos were gathering riches and knowledge in Cathay; the Great Khan was growing old and infirm, and the father and the uncle of Marco were now well stricken in years. It was time that they took back to Venice their gold, precious stones, and costly stuffs. But the old Emperor growled a refusal whenever they suggested that they would like to leave his court. A lucky chance gave them an opportunity of getting away.

The Khan of Persia, Arghun, who was a great-nephew of Kublai Khan, had lost his favourite wife, and, fulfilling her dying request, he now sent to the Mongol court for a lady of her own kin. The Lady Kukachin, a lovely damsel of seventeen years, was selected to be the bride of the Persian Khan, and three envoys of the widowed ruler were told to take

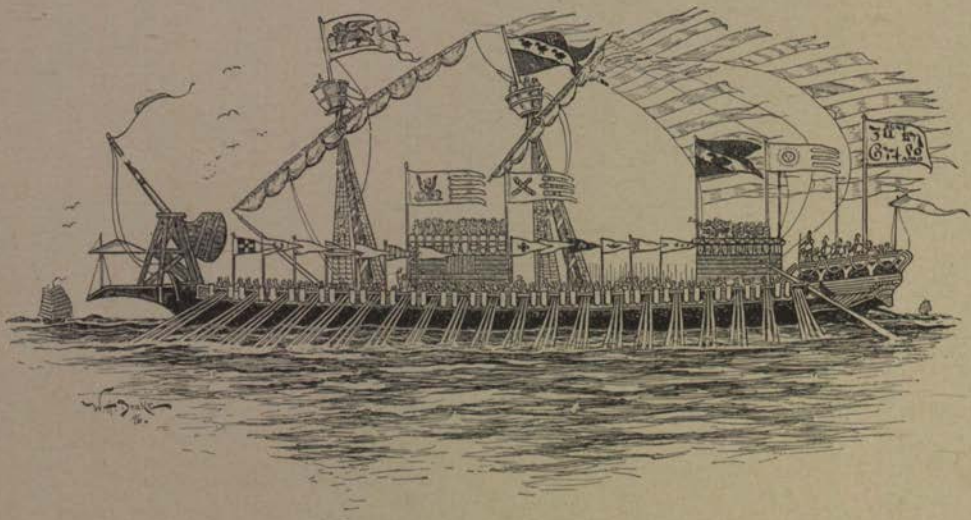
her to him. But the way from Cathay to Persia was very hazardous, owing to the wars which then prevailed; and it was thought best for the party to take ship from one of the ports of China to Ormus, on the Persian Gulf. The Tatars are not good sailors; and the Persian envoys, who could not get much help or comfort from their friends in the court of Kublai Khan when they planned their voyage, naturally bethought them of engaging the services of the three hardy and venturous Venetians, who were voyagers, as well as land travellers.

The Great Khan was most unwilling to part with his favourite and useful Venetians; but having consented to let them go, he fitted out a noble fleet of ships; and giving them friendly messages to many of the kings and potentates of Europe, including the king of England, he sped them on their way. They sailed from Zayton, now called Tsinchau, a seaport of Fuhkien, on the south-east coast of China, but were so detained by storms and the illness of some of the suite that it was twenty-six months before they arrived at their destination. Two of the three envoys died on the way; and when the three Venetians and the lady who had been confided to their care reached the court of Persia, they found that the Persian Khan was dead, and another, Kaikhatu, reigned in his stead. In that country and in those days, the wishes of a lady were not much

considered in the matter of marriage, and the son of the reigning Khan, Ghazan, married the young lady who had journeyed so far to find a husband. It is recorded that the young lady wept sadly when she parted with the kindly and noble Venetians; and so they took their way homeward, and arrived in Venice, as we have said, in the year 1295—more than six hundred years ago.

At that time Venice and Genoa were rival republics, not merely Italian cities. Each was an independent state, and held rich possessions in the Levant, the Crimea, and around the Mediterranean. They were almost continually at war with each other and with the republic of Pisa. It was expected and required of all rich and noble citizens of these republics, that they should furnish a certain number of fighters and war vessels whenever a war was brought on; and as most of the fighting was done on the sea, the great crafts, propelled by oars and called galleys, were brought into service. In one of these wars the Polo family took part, for they were rich and noble; and Marco Polo, now a man of mature years, was commander of a great and powerful galley. He had the misfortune to be captured in a battle with the Genoese fleet, off the island of Curzola, on the Dalmatian coast, in September, 1298.

After that great defeat, Marco Polo was carried a prisoner to Genoa, where he was held until some time



MARCO POLO'S GALLEY. [*To face p.* 18.

during the following year, probably in August, when, a treaty of peace between the two warring republics having been signed, he was restored to his own country. If Marco Polo had not been captured at the battle of Curzola, or in some other of the many sea-fights between the two republics, we probably never would have had his famous book to enlighten us concerning the lands he saw and described.

And this is how it happened. We have already seen that it was Marco's sensible custom to tell his adventures to those who came to ask him about his travels in the heart of Asia; and when he found himself shut up in the prison of Genoa, he speedily made the acquaintance of his fellow-prisoner, one Rusticiano of Pisa, who was also a captive of war. Luckily for us, Rusticiano was a writer of some repute; and hearing from Marco's lips many tales of marvellous adventure, he besought the traveller to set these down in writing. But noblemen, and indeed gentlemen of high degree, in those days did not think well of writing; it was no disgrace to be unable to write anything more than one's name; and the high and mighty of the land looked down with contempt upon "scriveners and scribes," as writers were called. The world has gotten bravely over that notion.

Howbeit, Marco agreed to dictate his story to Rusticiano, having recourse to his own memory, and

perhaps to the note-books which he must have written when he was in the service of the Great Khan, and which may have been sent to him while he was in the Genoese prison. It is to the book written by Rusticiano, as the words fell from the lips of Marco Polo, that we are indebted for the valuable information and the entertaining knowledge of the East which is now spread over many books. And it is because it was dictated, or recited, and not written by Marco's own hand, that we find that in it Marco is always spoken of in the third person ; he never says "I did this and that," but always "Messer Marco Polo" ; or he uses some such modest terms.

As the art of printing had not then been invented, Rusticiano was obliged to write on parchment the story of Marco Polo ; and for many years afterwards, copies of that book were very precious, for every one of them had to be written out with infinite labour, and some of them were illustrated with drawings and paintings of the wonders described in the book. The oldest and most valuable of these manuscript books in existence is in the Great Paris Library ; and, as it was undoubtedly written during the lifetime of Marco Polo, and may have been revised by him, it is regarded as the most authentic, as it is the oldest, of all the manuscript copies of Marco Polo's book. It may be the original book. There are, all told, more than seventy-five manuscript copies of Marco's book

in various parts of Europe, and written in various languages. The original work was written in French, then one of the commonest languages of the commercial world. The first printed edition of the book was in German, and was produced in Nuremberg in 1477. There have been several editions printed in English, the most famous and best of which, "Travels of Marco Polo," was translated and edited by Colonel Henry Yule, an English officer and scholar of renown. It is from his book that we derive all the information collected for the readers of these chapters.

The strange knowledge of the world which the book of Marco Polo contained, confirmed, among other things, the tales brought from the East by the Friars Plano Carpini and William Rubruquis in 1246 and 1253 respectively. People now learned that the eastern part of Asia did not run off into an impenetrable swamp covered with clouds of perpetual darkness; for the three Venetians had sailed from the south-eastern coast of Cathay, or China, round to the Persian Gulf. Scholars and travellers were a long time, however, trying to digest the vast amount of geographical knowledge brought back by the Polos. They learned that there was an ocean east of Asia, as well as an ocean west of Spain and England. Why didn't they begin to think of crossing westward from Spain to the Cathay of which such exact accounts had been brought by Marco Polo?

As written books were all that readers had, and these works were few and costly, the book of Messer Marco Polo did not have a wide circulation. As we have seen, people travelled very slowly in those days, and news and information of all kinds also spread with even greater slowness. When Christopher Columbus, who lived in the very city where Marco Polo had been imprisoned, and in which his book was written, began to pick up information about the world, some two hundred years later, he must have come across some of the tales told by Marco. But there is no certainty that he ever saw a copy of Polo's book. Columbus derived from other sources, or at second-hand from Polo, the facts which confirmed him in his belief that the sea between Europe and Cathay—the Ocean Sea—was very narrow, and that the round world was not so big as most people supposed.

But when Columbus finally set forth on his voyage into "the Sea of Darkness," bound for India and an unknown land, he carried with him letters written to the Great Khan by the sovereigns of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella. When he lighted upon what we now know as the islands of the American Continent, he supposed that he had touched the dominions of the Great Khan; and he was continually on the look-out for the land of Cipango, spoken of by Marco Polo, where there were such riches of gold and gems and fabulously gorgeous commodities.

In his lifetime, and indeed long after, Marco Polo was regarded as an inventor of idle tales. Even within fifty years, thoughtless and ignorant writers have alluded to him as a great liar; but time has set him right, and recent explorations and rediscoveries have proved that he told the truth about things and places that he saw. If he sometimes gave currency to fables and traditions, he never adopted them as his own; he told his readers what he had heard, and then left them to judge whether these things were true or not. And some of the wonders that he described, and which seemed incredible, are now proved to be not so wonderful after all. Now that we understand what a volcano is, we can admit that those, who never saw or heard of one, would be slow to believe a traveller who told of a burning mountain that continually sent forth fire and smoke from its inside. To this day some of the natives of tropical regions refuse to believe that water becomes a solid mass in the winter of the North, so that men and boys can walk on it, and drag heavy weights over it.

Marco Polo was not a great genius inspired with a lofty enthusiasm, as Christopher Columbus was; but he told the truth, and deserves a very high place among those who have made notable additions to the knowledge of the world. Perhaps he suffered some slight from the people who lived during his

own time, because they found it hard to believe that the world was inhabited by human beings all round it; that there was no sea of perpetual darkness, as they had been taught; and that the people of Asia were really ingenious and skilful traders and workers, and not savages and cannibals, as they had supposed. Perhaps, too, the big, swelling words and bombastic style, with which the worthy Rusticiano set forth Marco's book, caused some people to regard it with contempt and even suspicion. We cannot better conclude this chapter than with Rusticiano's prologue, or preface, to the book of Marco Polo:

GREAT Princes, Emperors, and Kings, Dukes, and Marquises, Counts, Knights, and Burgesses! and People of all degrees who desire to get knowledge of the various races of mankind and of the diversities of the sundry regions of the World, take this Book and cause it to be read to you. For ye shall find therein all kinds of wonderful things, and the divers histories of the great Hermenia, and of Persia, and of the Land of the Tartars, and of India, and of many another country of which our Book doth speak, particularly and in regular succession, according to the description of Messer Marco Polo, a wise and noble citizen of Venice, as he saw them with his own eyes. Some things indeed there be therein which he beheld not; but these he heard from men of credit and veracity. And we shall set down things seen as seen, and things heard as heard only, so that no jot of falsehood may mar the truth of our Book, and that all who shall read it or hear it read may put full faith in the truth of all its contents.

For let me tell you that since our Lord God did mould

with his hands our first Father Adam, even until this day, never hath there been Christian, or Pagan, or Tartar, or Indian, or any man of any nation, who in his own person hath had so much knowledge and experience of the divers parts of the World and its Wonders as hath had this Messer Marco! And for that reason he bethought himself that it would be a very great pity did he not cause to be put in writing all the great marvels that he had seen, or on sure information heard of, so that other people who had not these advantages might, by his Book, get such knowledge. And I may tell you that in acquiring this knowledge he spent in those various parts of the World good six-and-twenty years. Now, being thereafter an inmate of the Prison of Genoa, he caused Messer Rusticiano of Pisa, who was in the said Prison likewise, to reduce the whole to writing; and this befell in the year 1298 from the birth of Jesus.

CHAPTER III.

MARCO DISCOURSES OF ANCIENT ARMENIA—THE KINGDOM OF GEORGIANIA—THE EXPLOITS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT—STORY OF THE MISERLY CALIPH OF BAGDAD AND HIS GOLD—A GREAT MARVEL.

IN the former chapter we had the preface to Marco Polo's book as it was composed by Rusticiano. In reading the first chapter of the book itself, we can imagine the prisoner and illustrious traveller pacing up and down in his place of confinement, and dictating to his companion the words that are to be set down. And this is the first chapter of the work as dictated by Marco:

HERE THE BOOK BEGINS; AND FIRST IT SPEAKS OF THE LESSER HERMENIA.

THERE are two Hermenias, the Greater and the Less. The Lesser Hermenia is governed by a certain King, who maintains a just rule in his dominions, but is himself subject to the Tartar. The country contains numerous towns and villages, and has everything in plenty; moreover, it is a great country for sport in the chase of all manner of beasts and birds. It is, however, by no means a healthy

region, but grievously the reverse. In days of old the nobles there were valiant men, and did doughty deeds of arms; but nowadays they are poor creatures, and good at naught. Howbeit, they have a city upon the sea, which is called LAYAS, at which there is a great trade. For you must know that all the spicery, and the cloths of silk and gold, and other valuable wares that come from the interior, are brought to that city. And the merchants of Venice and Genoa, and other countries, come thither to sell their goods, and to buy what they lack. And whatsoever persons would travel to the interior (of the East), merchants or others, they take their way by this city of Layas.

By "Hermenia" we are to understand that the traveller is speaking of the country now known as Armenia, a province of Turkey in Asia, lying to the westward, embracing the regions of the valley of the Euphrates and the mountainous Ararat. The subdivisions of the greater and the less Armenia are not known and used nowadays. Here is what Marco has to say about the other division of Armenia:

DESCRIPTION OF THE GREATER HERMENIA.

This is a great country. It begins at a city called ARZINGA, at which they weave the best buckrams in the world. It possesses also the best baths from natural springs that are anywhere to be found. The people of the country are Armenians, and are subject to the Tartar.

The country is indeed a passing great one, and in the summer it is frequented by the whole host of the Tartars of the Levant, because it then furnishes them with such

excellent pasture for their cattle. But in winter the cold is past all bounds, so in that season they quit this country and go to a warmer region where they find other good pastures. [At a castle called PAIPURTH, that you pass in going from Trebizond to Tauris, there is a very good silver mine.]

And you must know that it is in this country of Hermenia that the Ark of Noah exists on the top of a certain great mountain, on the summit of which snow is so constant that no one can ascend; for the snow never melts, and is constantly added to by new falls. Below, however, the snow does melt, and runs down, producing such rich and abundant herbage that in summer cattle are sent to pasture from a long way round about, and it never fails them. The melting snow also causes a great amount of mud on the mountain.

The country is bounded on the south by a kingdom called Mosul, the people of which are Jacobite and Nestorian Christians, of whom I shall have more to tell you presently. On the north it is bounded by the Land of the Georgians, of whom also I shall speak. On the confines from Georgiania there is a fountain from which oil springs in great abundance, insomuch that a hundred shiploads might be taken from it at one time. This oil is not good to use with food, but 'tis good to burn, and is also used to anoint camels that have the mange. People come from vast distances to fetch it, for in all the countries round about they have no other oil.

Between Trebizond and Erzerum was Paipurth, which must be the Baiburt of our day. Even in Marco Polo's time it appears that something was known about petroleum, or coal-oil; for the fountain of which he speaks is doubtless in the petroleum

region on the peninsula of Baku, on the western coasts of the Caspian Sea, from which many ship-loads of oil are now annually exported, chiefly to Russia, under whose rule the country is now held. Even later than Marco's day it was believed that Noah's Ark, or fragments of it, rested on the top of Mount Ararat; but as that mountain is nearly 17,000 feet high, and is covered with perpetual snow, nobody had the courage to go up and find the ark, until as late as 1829, when the ascent was made by Professor Parrot, a German traveller.

Every school-boy knows that Bagdad was the seat of Arabic learning in ancient times, and that its name often appears in that most delightful book "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments" with that of the Caliph, the good Harun-al-Rachid. That famous personage died long before Marco Polo visited Bagdad; but the stories of the Arabian Nights were commonly believed by the people of those parts, as we shall see later on in Marco's book.

The kingdom of Georgiania, of which Marco Polo speaks, is that province of Russia which lies south of the Caucasian range of mountains, between the Black Sea and the Caspian. The Georgian men and women are still famous for their beauty; they represent the purest type of the Caucasian race now known. From this region, for centuries, Eastern princes and potentates have been wont to

bring the beautiful women of their harems. Other writers besides Marco refer to the fact that all the kings of ancient Georgia bore the name of David, just as each Roman emperor for a time was known as Cæsar. Marco sets down the statement about the eagle-mark on the right shoulder of the king, it will be noticed, with some reserve; he says this was true "in old times," as if it were a legend in the country in his day.

The reader will find that Marco uses the words "Ponent" and "Levant" throughout his book to distinguish between the extreme East and the more immediate West. East of the Caspian Sea was, and is, the Levant: westward, on both sides of the Black Sea, was the Ponent. Alexander the Great, whose conquests extended to these parts, occupied Derbend, or Derbent, a port on the west shore of the Caspian Sea, where to this day they will show you the remains of a wall along the the mountains, known as "Alexander's Rampart." The story goes that Alexander drove into the country beyond the mountains several unclean tribes, who were cannibals and idolaters, and shut them in by building a huge iron gate, which kept them securely behind the Caucasus.

Concerning the products of the country of which our traveller speaks, it may be said that boxwood, a dense, fine-grained wood, used for engraving

pictures for printing, is still brought from those regions, the Turkish boxwood being the most highly esteemed. The silk of the province of Gíl, or Ghellé, is famed for its high quality. In the Middle Ages one of the sports of royalty and nobility in Europe, as well as in Far Cathay, was hunting game with trained hawks, and the goshawks of Georgia were said to be the best in the world for that purpose. Marco's tale of the lake in which a great abundance of fish could be found during Lent, when all good Catholics eat no meat, and which were gone during the rest of the year, is only one of many such traditions of sundry rivers and lakes in different parts of the world. The same is told of many lands and countries; and if Marco believed what he heard of the miraculous fish of "St. Leonard's," he really believed one of the commonest travellers' tales of his time.

OF GEORGIANIA AND THE KINGS THEREOF.

In GEORGIANIA there is a King called David Melic, which is as much as to say "David King"; he is subject to the Tartar. In old times all the kings were born with the figure of an eagle upon the right shoulder. The people are very handsome, capital archers, and most valiant soldiers. They are Christians of the Greek Rite, and have a fashion of wearing their hair cropped, like Churchmen.

This is the country beyond which Alexander could not pass when he wished to penetrate to the region of the Ponent, because that the defile was so narrow and perilous,

the sea lying on the one hand, and on the other lofty mountains impassable to horsemen. The strait extends like this for four leagues, and a handful of people might hold it against all the world. Alexander caused a very strong tower to be built there, to prevent the people beyond from passing to attack him, and this got the name of the IRON GATE. This is the place that the Book of Alexander speaks of, when it tells us how he shut up the Tartars between two mountains; not that they were really Tartars, however, for there were no Tartars in those days, but they consisted of a race of people called COMANIANS and many besides.

In this province all the forests are of boxwood. There are numerous towns and villages, and silk is produced in great abundance. They also weave cloths of gold, and all kinds of very fine silk stuffs. The country produces the best goshawks in the world, which are called *Avigi*. It has indeed no lack of anything, and the people live by trade and handicrafts. 'Tis a very mountainous region, and full of strait defiles and of fortresses, insomuch that the Tartars have never been able to subdue it out and out.

There is in this country a certain Convent of Nuns called St. Leonard's, about which I have to tell you a very wonderful circumstance. Near the church in question there is a great lake at the foot of a mountain, and in this lake are found no fish, great or small, throughout the year till Lent come. On the first day of Lent they find in it the finest fish in the world, and great store too thereof; and these continue to be found till Easter Eve. After that they are found no more till Lent come round again; and so 'tis every year. 'Tis really a passing great miracle!

That sea whereof I spoke as coming so near the mountains is called the Sea of GHEL or GHELAN, and extends about seven hundred miles. It is twelve days' journey distant from any other sea, and into it flows the great

River Euphrates and many others, whilst it is surrounded by mountains. Of late the merchants of Genoa have begun to navigate this sea, carrying ships across and launching them thereon. It is from the country on this sea also that the silk called *Ghellé* is brought. The said sea produces quantities of fish, especially sturgeon, at the river-mouths salmon, and other big kinds of fish.

In Marco's day Bagdad was known as Baudas; and one of the chapters of his book runs thus:

OF THE GREAT CITY OF BAUDAS, AND HOW IT WAS TAKEN.

BAUDAS is a great city, which used to be the seat of the Calif of all the Saracens in the world, just as Rome is the seat of the Pope of all the Christians. A very great river flows through the city, and by this you can descend to the Sea of India. There is a great traffic of merchants with their goods this way; they descend some eighteen days from Baudas, and then come to a certain city called KISI, where they enter the Sea of India. There is also on the river, as you go from Baudas to Kisi, a great city called BASTRA, surrounded by woods, in which grow the best dates in the world.

In Baudas they weave many different kinds of silk stuffs and gold brocades, such as *nasich*, and *nac*, and *cramoisy*, and many other beautiful tissues richly wrought with figures of beasts and birds. It is the noblest and greatest city in all those regions.

Now it came to pass on a day in the year of Christ 1255, that the Lord of the Tartars of the Levant, whose name was Alaü, brother to the Great Kaan now reigning, gathered a mighty host and came up against Baudas and took it by storm. It was a great enterprise! for in Baudas there were

more than one hundred thousand horse, besides foot soldiers. And when Alaü had taken the place he found therein a tower of the Calif's, which was full of gold and silver and other treasure; in fact, the greatest accumulation of treasure in one spot that was ever known. When he beheld that great heap of treasure he was astonished, and, summoning the Calif to his presence, he said to him: "Calif, tell me now why thou hast gathered such a huge treasure? What didst thou mean to do therewith? Knewest thou not that I was thine enemy, and that I was coming against thee with so great an host to cast thee forth of thine heritage? Wherefore didst thou not take of thy gear and employ it in paying knights and soldiers to defend thee and thy city?"

The Calif wist not what to answer, and said never a word. So the Prince continued: "Now then, Calif, since I see what a love thou hast borne thy treasure, I will e'en give it thee to eat!" So he shut the Calif up in the Treasure Tower, and bade that neither meat nor drink should be given him, saying: "Now, Calif, eat of thy treasure as much as thou wilt, since thou art so fond of it; for never shalt thou have aught else to eat!"

So the Calif lingered in the tower four days, and then died like a dog. Truly his treasure would have been of more service to him had he bestowed it upon men who would have defended his kingdom and his people, rather than let himself be taken and deposed and put to death as he was. Howbeit, since that time, there has been never another Calif, either at Baudas or anywhere else.

The Bastra of Marco Polo is the modern Basra, which is situated below the meeting of the Euphrates and the Tigris, and is still famed for the abundance of its delicious dates. The beautiful cloths called

by Marco *nac*, *nasich*, and *cramoisy* were woven of silk and gold threads; and when they found their way to the courts of Europe, long afterwards, they were worn by the rich and great. In tales of the time of good Queen Bess we find references to *cramoisy*.

Many modern writers have made use of the story of the miserly Caliph of Bagdad who perished so miserably in the midst of his gold; and it is clear that the poet Longfellow had in mind the tale told by Marco Polo when he wrote in his "Flower-de-Luce" the poem of "Kambalu," the chief part of which runs thus:

I said to the Kalif: Thou art old;
Thou hast no need of so much gold.
Thou shouldst not have heaped and hidden it here
Till the breath of battle was hot and near,
But have sown through the land these useless hoards,
To spring into shining blades of swords,
And keep thine honour sweet and clear.

. . . . .

Then into his dungeon I locked the drone,
And left him there to feed all alone
In the honey-cells of his golden hive:
Never a prayer nor a cry nor a groan
Was heard from those massive walls of stone,
Nor again was the Kalif seen alive.

This is the story strange and true,
That the great Captain Alaü
Told to his brother, the Tartar Khan,
When he rode that day into Kambalu
By the road that leadeth to Ispahan.

Marco Polo now proceeds to tell us of "a great marvel that occurred between Baudas and Mansul":

There was a Calif of Baudas [probably the predecessor of our miserly friend] who bore a great hatred to Christians, and was taken up day and night with the thought how he might bring those that were in his kingdom over to his own faith, or might procure them all to be slain. And he used daily to take counsel about this with the devotees and priests of his faith, for they all bore the Christians like malice. And, indeed, it is a fact that the whole body of Saracens throughout the world are always most malignantly disposed towards the whole body of Christians.

Now it happened that the Calif, with those shrewd priests of his, got hold of that passage in our Gospel which says, that if a Christian had faith as a grain of mustard seed, and should bid a mountain be removed, it would be removed. And such indeed is the truth. But when they had got hold of this text they were delighted, for it seemed to them the very thing whereby either to force all the Christians to change their faith, or to bring destruction upon them all. The Calif therefore called together all the Christians in his territories, who were extremely numerous, and when they had come before him he showed them the Gospel, and made them read the text which I have mentioned. And when they had read it, he asked them if that was the truth? The Christians answered that it assuredly was so. "Well," said the Calif, "since you say that it is the truth, I will give you a choice. Among such a number of you there must needs surely be this small amount of faith, so you must either move that mountain there"—and he pointed to a mountain in the neighbourhood—"or you shall die an ill death; unless you choose to eschew death by all becoming Saracens and adopting

our Holy Law. To this end I give you a respite of ten days; if the thing be not done by that time, ye shall die or become Saracens." And when he had said this he dismissed them to consider what was to be done in this strait wherein they were.

All the wisest of the Christians took counsel together, and among them were a number of bishops and priests; but they had no resource except to turn to Him from whom all good things do come, beseeching Him to protect them from the cruel hands of the Calif.

So they were all gathered together in prayer, both men and women, for eight days and eight nights. And whilst they were thus engaged in prayer it was revealed in a vision by a Holy Angel of Heaven to a certain Bishop who was a very good Christian, that he should desire a certain Cobbler, who had but one eye, to pray to God, and that God in His goodness would grant such prayer because of the Cobbler's holy life.

Now when this vision had visited the Bishop several times, he related the whole matter to the Christians, and they agreed with one consent to call the Cobbler before them. And when he had come, they told him it was their wish that he should pray, and that God had promised to accomplish the matter by his means. On hearing their request, he made many excuses, declaring that he was not at all so good a man as they represented. But they persisted in their request with so much sweetness, that at last he said he would not tarry, but do what they desired.

And when the appointed day was come, all the Christians got up early, men and women, small and great—more than one hundred thousand persons—and went to church, and heard the Holy Mass. And after Mass had been sung, they all went forth together in a great procession to the plain in front of the mountain, carrying the precious Cross before them, loudly singing and greatly weeping as they

went. And when they arrived at the spot, there they found the Calif with all his Saracen host armed to slay them if they would not change their faith ; for the Saracens believed not in the least that God would grant such favour to the Christians. These latter stood, indeed, in great fear and doubt, but nevertheless they rested their hope on their God Jesus Christ.

So the Cobbler received the Bishop's benison, and then threw himself on his knees before the Holy Cross, and stretched out his hands towards Heaven, and made this prayer: "Blessed Lord God Almighty, I pray Thee by Thy goodness that Thou wilt grant this grace unto Thy people, insomuch that they perish not, nor Thy faith be cast down, nor abused, nor flouted. Not that I am in the least worthy to prefer such request unto Thee ; but for Thy great power and mercy I beseech Thee to hear this prayer from me Thy servant full of sin."

And when he had ended this his prayer to God the Sovereign Father and Giver of all grace, and whilst the Calif and all the Saracens and other people there were looking on, the mountain rose out of its place, and moved to the spot which the Calif had pointed out. And when the Calif and all his Saracens beheld, they stood amazed at the wonderful miracle that God had wrought for the Christians, insomuch that a great number of the Saracens became Christians. And even the Calif caused himself to be baptised in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen, and became a Christian, but in secret. Howbeit, when he died, they found a little cross hung round his neck ; and therefore the Saracens would not bury him with the other Califs, but put him in a place apart. The Christians exulted greatly at this most holy miracle, and returned to their homes full of joy, giving thanks to their Creator for that which He had done.

CHAPTER IV.

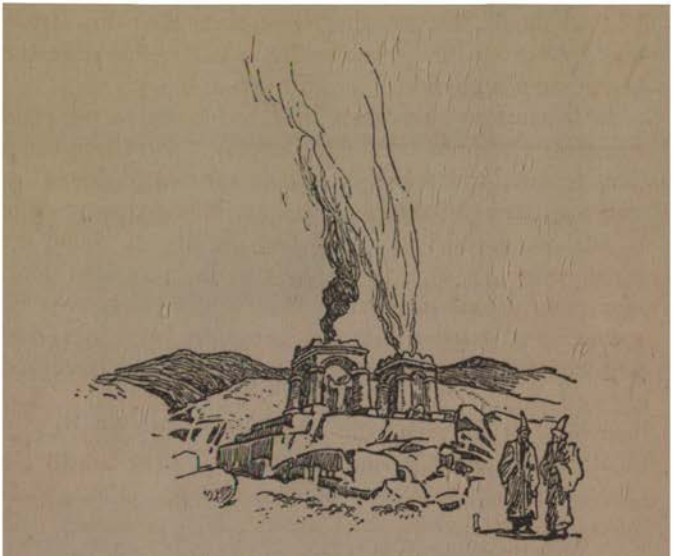
THE THREE KINGS—THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN—STORIES AND ADVENTURES IN PERSIA—ORIGIN OF THE ASSASSINS.

DOUBTLESS all our readers are well acquainted with the story of the visit of the Three Kings, or Magi, to Bethlehem, when the Saviour was born. There is an ancient Christian tradition that the three men set out from Persia, and that their names were Melchior, Balthazar, and Kaspar: these wise men of the East, as they were called, are supposed to have returned to Persia after their visit to Palestine; and Marco Polo tells this tale as it was told to him:

OF THE GREAT COUNTRY OF PERSIA; WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE THREE KINGS.

PERSIA is a great country, which was in old times very illustrious and powerful; but now the Tartars have wasted and destroyed it.

In Persia is the city of Saba, from which the Three Magi set out when they went to worship Jesus Christ; and in this city they are buried, in three very large and beautiful monuments side by side. And above them there is a square building, carefully kept. The bodies are still entire with the hair and beard remaining. Messer Marco Polo



THE CASTLE OF THE FIRE-WORSHIPPERS.

asked a great many questions of the people of that city as to those Three Magi, but never one could he find that knew aught of the matter except that these were Three Kings who were buried there in days of old. However, at a place three days' journey distant he heard of what I am going to tell you. He found a village there which goes by the name of Cala Ataperistan, which is as much as to say, "The Castle of the Fire-worshippers." And the name is

rightly applied, for the people there do worship fire, and I will tell you why.

They relate that in old times Three Kings of that country went away to worship a Prophet that was born, and they carried with them three manner of offerings, Gold, and Frankincense, and Myrrh; in order to ascertain whether that prophet were God, or an earthly king, or a physician. For, say they, if He take the Gold, then He is an earthly king; if He take the Incense, He is God; if he take the Myrrh, he is a physician.

So it came to pass when they had come to the place where the Child was born, the youngest of the Three Kings went in first, and found the Child apparently just of his own age; so he went forth again, marvelling greatly. The middle one entered next, and like the first he found the Child seemingly of his own age; so he also went forth again, and marvelled greatly. Lastly, the eldest went in, and as it had befallen the other two, so it befell him; and he went forth very pensive. And when the three had rejoined one another, each told what he had seen; and then they all marvelled the more. So they agreed to go in all three together, and on doing so they beheld the Child with the appearance of its actual age, to wit, some thirteen days. Then they adored, and presented their Gold, and Incense, and Myrrh. And the Child took all the three offerings, and then gave them a small closed box; whereupon the Kings departed to return into their own land.

And when they had ridden many days, they said they would see what the Child had given them. So they opened the little box, and inside it they found a stone. On seeing this they began to wonder what this might be that the Child had given them, and what was the import thereof. Now the signification was this: When they presented their offerings, the Child had accepted all three; and when they

saw that, they had said within themselves that He was the True God, and the True King, and the True Physician. And what the gift of the stone implied was that this Faith which had begun in them should abide firm as a rock. For He well knew what was in their thoughts. Howbeit, they had no understanding at all of this signification of the gift of the stone; so they cast it into a well. Then straightway a fire from Heaven descended into that well wherein the stone had been cast.

And when the Three Kings beheld this marvel they were sore amazed, and it greatly repented them that they had cast away the stone; for well they then perceived that it had a great and holy meaning. So they took of that fire, and carried it into their own country, and placed it in a rich and beautiful church. And there the people keep it continually burning, and worship it as a god, and all the sacrifices they offer are kindled with that fire. And if ever the fire becomes extinct, they go to other cities round about where the same faith is held, and obtain of that fire from them, and carry it to the church. And this is the reason why the people of this country worship fire. They will often go ten days' journey to get of that fire.

Such then was the story told by the people of that Castle to Messer Marco Polo; they declared to him for a truth that such was their history, and that one of the Three Kings was of the city called SABA, and the second of AVA, and the third of that very Castle where they still worship fire, with the people of all the country round about.

The latter part of this account of the Three Kings and their doings undoubtedly refers to the ancient Persian sect of fire-worshippers, known as Parsees. The custom of worshipping fire as the source of life,

THE THREE KINGS AT THE WELL.

[*To face p.* 42.

light, and warmth is almost as old as the human race. We can readily imagine how profound must have been the reverence and admiration with which the primitive man regarded fire when first that element was brought into his view. The warming, kindling flame, its ruddy and changeful colours and shapes, and the comforting of its warmth, must have inspired him with rapture and adoration. The sect founded by Zoroaster, who flourished about six hundred years before the Christian era, paid reverence to the four elements of fire, air, earth, and water; from these people, it is believed, descended the Persian fire-worshippers, or Parsees. In the course of time, however, Persia adopted the Moslem faith, and the fire-worshippers were expelled from the country. The greater part of them fled to India, where they are found in large numbers at the present time; forty thousand of them are living in Bombay, and there are not less than two hundred thousand Parsees in all India.

The sacred fire which attracted the attention of Marco Polo is still maintained in the temples of the Indian fire-worshippers; and if by accident the fire should die, it is rekindled by coals brought from another temple, as was the custom among the fire-worshippers of whom Marco gives account. "The Towers of Silence," near Bombay, are isolated, lonely structures where the Parsees expose their dead to be

devoured by the flocks of vultures that hover around the place.

In Polo's further account of Persia we have the following interesting chapter:

OF THE EIGHT KINGDOMS OF PERSIA, AND HOW THEY ARE NAMED.

Now you must know that Persia is a very great country, and contains eight kingdoms. I will tell you the names of them all.

The first kingdom is that at the beginning of Persia, and it is called CASVIN; the second is further to the south, and is called CURDISTAN; the third is called LOR; the fourth SUOLSTAN; the fifth ISTANIT; the sixth SERAZY; the seventh SONCARA; the eighth TUNOCAIN, which is at the further extremity of Persia. All these kingdoms lie in a southerly direction except one, to wit, Tunocain; that lies towards the east, and borders on the country of the Arbre Sol.

In this country of Persia there is a great supply of fine horses, and people take them to India for sale, for they are horses of great price, a single one being worth as much of their money as is equal to 200 livres Tournois; some will be more, some less, according to the quality. Here also are the finest asses in the world, one of them being worth 30 marks of silver, for they are very large and fast, and acquire a capital amble. Dealers carry their horses to Kisi and Curmosa, two cities on the shores of the Sea of India, and there they meet with merchants who take the horses on to India for sale.

In this country there are many cruel and murderous people, so that no day passes but there is some homicide among them. Were it not for the Government, which is that of the Tartars of the Levant, they would do great

mischief to merchants; and indeed, maugre the Government, they often succeed in doing such mischief. Unless merchants be well armed they run the risk of being murdered, or at least robbed of everything; and it sometimes happens that a whole party perishes in this way when not on their guard. The people are all Saracens, *i.e.* followers of the Law of Mahommet.

In the cities there are traders and artisans who live by their labour and crafts, weaving cloths of gold, and silk stuffs of sundry kinds. They have plenty of cotton produced in the country; and abundance of wheat, barley, millet, panick, and wine, with fruit of all kinds.

CONCERNING THE GREAT CITY OF YASDI.

YASDI also is properly in Persia; it is a good and noble city, and has a great amount of trade. They weave there quantities of a certain silk tissue known as *Yasdi*, which merchants carry into many quarters to dispose of. The people are worshippers of Mahommet.

When you leave this city to travel further, you ride for seven days over great plains, finding harbour to receive you at three places only. There are many fine woods, producing dates, upon the way, such as one can easily ride through; and in them there is great sport to be had in hunting and hawking, there being partridges and quails and abundance of other game, so that the merchants who pass that way have plenty of diversion. There are also wild asses, handsome creatures. At the end of those seven marches over the plain you come to a fine kingdom which is called Kerman.

CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF KERMAN.

KERMAN is a kingdom which is also properly in Persia, and formerly it had a hereditary prince. Since the Tartars

conquered the country the rule is no longer hereditary, but the Tartar sends to administer whatever lord he pleases. In this kingdom are produced the stones called turquoises in great abundance; they are found in the mountains, where they are extracted from the rocks. There are also plenty of veins of steel and *ondanique.* The people are very skilful in making harness of war; their saddles, bridles, spurs, swords, bows, quivers, and arms of every kind are very well made indeed, according to the fashion of those parts. The ladies of the country and their daughters also produce exquisite needlework in the embroidery of silk stuffs in different colours, with figures of beasts and birds, trees and flowers, and a variety of other patterns. They work hangings for the use of noblemen so deftly that they are marvels to see, as well as cushions, pillows, quilts, and all sorts of things.

In the mountains of Kerman are found the best falcons in the world. They are inferior in size to the peregrine, red on the breast, under the neck, and between the thighs; their flight so swift that no bird can escape them.

On quitting the city you ride on for seven days, always finding towns, villages, and handsome dwelling-houses, so that it is very pleasant travelling; and there is excellent sport also to be had by the way in hunting and hawking. When you have ridden those seven days over a plain country, you come to a great mountain; and when you have got to the top of the pass, you find a great descent which occupies some two days to go down. All along you find a variety and abundance of fruits; and in former days there were plenty of inhabited places on the road, but now there are none; and you meet with only a few people looking after their cattle at pasture. From the city of Kerman to this descent the cold in winter is so great that you can scarcely abide it, even with a great quantity of clothing.

OF THE CITY OF CAMADI AND ITS RUINS; ALSO TOUCHING THE CARAONA ROBBERS.

After you have ridden downhill those two days, you find yourself in a vast plain, and at the beginning thereof there is a city called CAMADI, which formerly was a great and noble place, but now is of little consequence, for the Tartars in their incursions have several times ravaged it. The plain whereof I speak is a very hot region; and the province that we now enter is called REOBARLES.

The fruits of the country are dates, pistachioes, and apples of Paradise, with others of the like not found in our cold climate. There are vast numbers of turtle-doves, attracted by the abundance of fruits; but the Saracens never take them, for they hold them in abomination. And on this plain there is a kind of bird called francolin, but different from the francolin of other countries, for their colour is a mixture of black and white, and the feet and beak are vermilion colour.

The beasts also are peculiar; and first I will tell you of their oxen. These are very large, and all over white as snow; the hair is very short and smooth, which is owing to the heat of the country. The horns are short and thick, not sharp in the point; and between the shoulders they have a round hump some two palms high. There are no handsomer creatures in the world. And when they have to be loaded, they kneel like the camel; once the load is adjusted, they rise. Their load is a heavy one, for they are very strong animals. Then there are sheep here as big as asses; and their tails are so large and fat that one tail shall weigh some thirty pounds. They are fine fat beasts, and afford capital mutton.

In this plain there are a number of villages and towns which have lofty walls of mud, made as a defence against the banditti, who are very numerous, and are called

CARAONAS. This name is given them because they are the sons of Indian mothers by Tartar fathers. And you must know that when these Caraonas wish to make a plundering incursion, they have certain devilish enchantments whereby they do bring darkness over the face of day, insomuch that you can scarcely discern your comrade riding beside you; and this darkness they will cause to extend over a space of seven days' journey. They know the country thoroughly, and ride abreast, keeping near one another, sometimes to the number of ten thousand, at other times more or fewer. In this way they extend across the whole plain that they are going to harry, and catch every living thing that is found outside of the towns and villages; man, woman, or beast, nothing can escape them! The old men whom they take in this way they butcher; the young men and the women they sell for slaves in other countries; thus the whole land is ruined, and has become well-nigh a desert.

The king of these scoundrels is called NOGODAR. This Nogodar had gone to the Court of Chagatai, who was own brother to the Great Kaan, with some ten thousand horsemen of his, and abode with him; for Chagatai was his uncle. And whilst there this Nogodar devised a most audacious enterprise; and I will tell you what it was. He left his uncle, who was then in Greater Armenia, and fled with a great body of horsemen, cruel, unscrupulous fellows, first through BADASHAN, and then through another province called PASHAI-DIR, and then through another called ARIORA-KESHEMUR. There he lost a great number of his people and of his horses, for the roads were very narrow and perilous. And when he had conquered all those provinces, he entered India at the extremity of a province called DALIVAR. He established himself in that city and government, which he took from the King of the country, ASEDIN SOLDAN by name, a man of great power

and wealth. And there abideth Nogodar with his army, afraid of nobody, and waging war with all the Tartars in his neighbourhood.

Now that I have told you of those scoundrels and their history, I must add the fact that Messer Marco himself was all but caught by their bands in such a darkness as that I have told you of; but, as it pleased God, he got off and threw himself into a village that was hard by, called CONOSALMI. Howbeit he lost his whole company except seven persons who escaped along with him. The rest were caught, and some of them sold, some put to death.

Marco sometimes regards a city as a province, or even a kingdom, as he does in this list of the "eight kingdoms of Persia." It is now supposed by the most intelligent writers on Persia that Marco refers to the ancient city of Kazwin, which he calls Casvin, the first on his list. But the province in that part of Persia, the northern, is now known as Irak. Curdistan is an old form of spelling Kurdistan. Lor is Luristan, next to the southward, and the people of that province are still noted thieves and bandits. Suolstan, so called by Marco, is probably the modern Shulistan; the region known by that name was inhabited by the Shuls, or Shauls. Marco's Istanit is now believed to be the famous city of Ispahan; and Serazy is readily translatable into the modern Shiraz. Soncara is the country of the Shawankars; Tunocain is Kuhistan, the hill country of Persia, of which Tun and Kain are the chief cities.

Persian horses are quite as famous for beauty and speed as they were in the days when our Venetian traveller explored the country in which they were bred. These fine animals are still exported to India, whence a few of them are ultimately carried to England and other parts of Europe. Colonel Yule, in his book about Marco Polo, tells of a horse of this breed that travelled nine hundred miles in eleven days, and of another that accomplished about eleven hundred miles within twelve days, taking two days of that time for rest. The *livre tournois*, which Marco uses as a standard of coin valuation, was worth £1 sterling in modern English money, allowing for the lower relative value of gold as compared with silver in those far-off days; so that a fine Persian steed would cost about £193, English money, or a little more than $950, American money. The silver mark of that time, thirty of which were paid for a good donkey, would be about equal to forty English shillings; and that sum—thirty marks—again allowing for the lower value of gold as related to silver, would be equal to £88 sterling, or $440, American currency.

The fame of Oriental steel blades has extended all over the world, dating back to the most ancient times; and marvellous stories are told of the flexibility, sharpness, and hardness of edged weapons made by Arabs, Moors, and other warlike tribes of the East.

The *ondanique* of Marco Polo is probably the "Indian steel" of which many writers have made mention. It was so manufactured that a blade of this material possessed an edge of surpassing keenness and hardness. It was said that a Kerman sabre would cleave a European metal helmet in twain without turning its own edge. The embroidered and woven silk stuffs and carpets of the Kerman region are still held in high repute on account of their fineness and beauty.

The francolin, referred to in the extract above quoted, is the bird known in England and some parts of America as the black partridge, and is highly esteemed for its delicate quality. Any intelligent youngster will recognise the humped oxen that attracted the attention of Marco Polo and awakened his interest. They are to be found in India and other Eastern countries, and poor is the menagerie that does not have one or two specimens of the zebu, or Indian ox, as it is now called. These beasts are very docile, and are taught to kneel to receive the loads which they carry on their backs. Fat-tailed sheep are also common in various portions of Asia Minor and Africa. The tail is broad and flat, sometimes weighing fifty or sixty pounds, and is considered a great delicacy by the inhabitants of those parts of the world. Some travellers of good repute have said, that they have seen fat-tailed

sheep whose tails were so large, that each animal was provided with a slab of wood, fitted under the tail, with little trucks, or wheels, attached to the end that dragged on the ground.

The notion that fogs and mists can be brought upon the face of the earth by the command of an enchanter is truly Oriental; this is still believed in some parts of India, and Mr. F. Marion Crawford, the novelist, has made use of an enchanted fog in one of his romances. It is certain, however, that a dry fog, which seems to be really a dust-storm, is of common occurrence in Persia and Northern India. The phenomenon is strange and baffling, and it is not surprising that the residents of that country, not understanding why the air should be filled with dry dust while it is yet perfectly still, should charge this to the operations of some enchanter. In such a dust-storm the raids of robbers, who take advantage of the panic and the obscurity prevailing, would be successful, and very disastrous to the unfortunates whose flocks and herds would be captured and driven off. The Caraonas, nowadays known as Hazaras, are bold and daring brigands; they have sometimes ridden up to the very gates of the city of Ispahan on their wild forays in search of plunder, ravaging the country and leaving behind them nothing that can be carried off or destroyed.

Here may be given a few extracts from Marco's

interesting account of the city of Hormos and its inhabitants, showing what they eat and drink, how they build their ships, and how they avoid the poison-wind and its terrible effects.

'Tis, he says, a city of immense trade. There are plenty of towns and villages under it, but it is the capital. The King is called Ruomedam Ahomet. It is a very sickly place, and the heat of the sun is tremendous. If any foreign merchant dies there, the King takes all his property.

In this country they make a wine of dates mixed with spices, which is very good. When any one not used to it first drinks this wine, it causes repeated and violent pains; but afterwards he is all the better for it, and gets fat upon it. The people never eat meat and wheaten bread except when they are ill, and if they take such food when they are in health it makes them ill. Their food when in health consists of dates and salt fish (tunny, to wit) and onions, and this kind of diet they maintain in order to preserve their health.

Their ships are wretched affairs, and many of them get lost; for they have no iron fastenings, and are only stitched together with twine made from the husk of the Indian nut. They beat this husk until it becomes like horsehair, and from that they spin twine, and with this stitch the planks of the ships together. It keeps well, and is not corroded by the sea-water, but it will not stand well in a storm. The ships are not pitched, but are rubbed with fish-oil. They have one mast, one sail, and one rudder, and have no deck, but only a cover spread over the cargo when loaded. This cover consists of hides, and on the top of these hides they put the horses which they take to India for sale. They have no iron to make nails of, and for this reason they use only wooden trenails in their shipbuilding,

and then stitch the planks with twine as I have told you. Hence 'tis a perilous business to go a voyage in one of those ships, and many of them are lost, for in that Sea of India the storms are often terrible.

The people are black, and are worshippers of Mahommet. The residents avoid living in the cities, for the heat in summer is so great that it would kill them. Hence they go out (to sleep) at their gardens in the country, where there are streams and plenty of water. For all that they would not escape but for one thing that I will mention. The fact is, you see, that in summer a wind often blows across the sands which encompass the plain, so intolerably hot that it would kill everybody, were it not that, when they perceive that wind coming, they plunge into water up to the neck, and so abide until the wind have ceased.

And to prove the great heat of this wind, Messer Mark related a case that befell when he was there. The Lord of Hormos, not having paid his tribute to the King of Kerman, the latter resolved to claim it at the time when the people of Hormos were residing away from the city. So he caused a force of sixteen hundred horse and five thousand foot to be got ready, and sent them by the route of Reobarles to take the others by surprise. Now it happened one day that through the fault of their guide they were not able to reach the place appointed for their night's halt, and were obliged to bivouac in the wilderness not far from Hormos. In the morning as they were starting on their march they were caught by that wind, and every man of them was suffocated, so that not one survived to carry the tidings to their lord. When the people of Hormos heard of this, they went forth to bury the bodies, lest they should breed a pestilence. But when they laid hold of them by the arms to drag them to the pits, the bodies proved to be so *baked*, as it were, by that tremendous heat, that the arms parted from the trunks, and in the

end the people had to dig graves hard by each where it lay, and so cast them in.

In Marco's account of Persia we find the hero Alaü again mentioned by name. It was Alaü who captured the castle of the miserly Caliph; and he it was who put an end to the crimes of the wicked Old Man of the Mountain. Here is the chapter concerning both of those two personages:

CONCERNING THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

MULEHET is a country in which the Old Man of the Mountain dwelt in former days; and the name means "*Place of the Aram.*" I will tell you his whole history as related by Messer Marco Polo, who heard it from several natives of that region.

The Old Man was called in their language ALOADIN. He had caused a certain valley between two mountains to be enclosed, and had turned it into a garden, the largest and most beautiful that ever was seen, filled with every variety of fruit. In it were erected pavilions and palaces, the most elegant that can be imagined, all covered with gilding and exquisite painting. And there were runnels, too, flowing freely with wine and milk and honey and water; and numbers of ladies, the most beautiful in the world, who could play on all manner of instruments, and sang most sweetly, and danced in a manner that it was charming to behold. For the Old Man desired to make his people believe that this was actually Paradise. So he had fashioned it after the description that Mahommet gave of his Paradise, to wit, that it should be a beautiful garden running with conduits of wine and milk and honey and water;

and sure enough the Saracens of those parts believed that it *was* Paradise.

Now no man was allowed to enter the Garden save those whom he intended to be his ASHISHIN. There was a Fortress at the entrance to the Garden, strong enough to resist all the world, and there was no other way to get in. He kept at his Court a number of the youths of the country, from twelve to twenty years of age, such as had a taste for soldiering, and to these he used to tell tales about Paradise, just as Mahommet had been wont to do, and they believed in him just as the Saracens believe in Mahommet. Then he would introduce them into his Garden, some four, or six, or ten at a time, having first made them drink a certain potion which cast them into a deep sleep, and then causing them to be lifted and carried in. So when they awoke they found themselves in the Garden.

Now this Prince whom we call the Old One kept his Court in grand and noble style, and made those simple hill-folks about him believe firmly that he was a great Prophet. And when he wanted one of his Ashishin to send on any mission, he would cause that potion, whereof I spoke, to be given to one of the youths in the Garden, and then had him carried into his Palace. So when the young man awoke, he found himself in the Castle, and no longer in that Paradise; whereat he was not over-well pleased. He was then conducted to the Old Man's presence, and bowed before him with great veneration, as believing himself to be in the presence of a true Prophet. The Prince would then ask whence he came, and he would reply that he came from Paradise! and that it was exactly such as Mahommet had described it in the Law. This of course gave the others who stood by, and who had not been admitted, the greatest desire to enter therein.

So when the Old Man would have any Prince slain, he would say to such a youth: "Go thou and slay So-and-So; and

THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN.

[*To face p.* 56.

when thou returnest my Angels shall bear thee into Paradise. And shouldst thou die, natheless even so will I send my Angels to carry thee back into Paradise." So he caused them to believe ; and thus there was no order of his that they would not affront any peril to execute, for the great desire they had to get back into that Paradise of his. And in this manner the Old One got his people to murder any one whom he desired to get rid of. Thus, too, the great dread that he inspired all Princes withal made them become his tributaries, in order that he might abide at peace and amity with them.

I should also tell you that the Old Man had certain others under him, who copied his proceedings and acted exactly in the same manner. One of these was sent into the territory of Damascus, and the other into Curdistan.

Now it came to pass in the year 1252, that Alaü, Lord of the Tartars of the Levant, heard tell of these great crimes of the Old Man, and resolved to make an end of him. So he took and sent one of his Barons with a great Army to that Castle, and they besieged it for three years, but they could not take it, so strong was it. And indeed if they had had food within, it never would have been taken. But after being besieged those three years they ran short of victual, and were taken. The Old Man was put to death with all his men, and the Castle with its Garden of Paradise was levelled with the ground. And since that time he has had no successor; and there was an end to all his villainies.

The region in which, according to Marco Polo, the Old Man of the Mountain lived and reigned was the mountainous part of Persia, in the far north. But in the time of the first Crusaders, which was some two hundred years earlier, the chief of a band

of scoundrels and men-slayers, one Hassan-ben-Sabah, had his stronghold in Mount Lebanon, in the southern part of Syria; and he was also known as the Old Man of the Mountain.

It is interesting to know that the story of the Old One was current all over the East, and that we get our word "assassin" from the vile practices of that wicked man, who really did exist, and whose followers are still to be found in remote corners of the East. The drug which he gave to those whom he desired to enlist in his band was hashish, or *Cannabis Indica.* This is a learned name for Indian hemp, from which the drug is derived. Men who used the hashish to give them pleasant sleep and beautiful dreams were called "hashishiyyin"; and it was easy to make the word "assassin" out of hashishiyyin.

That this is the true origin of the English word nobody need doubt. As Marco passed by the castle of the Old Man of the Mountain not long after the defeat of the latter by the Prince Alaü, we can believe that he heard a true account of what had happened; and it is not unlikely that the followers of this chief, the Assassins, as they were called, were a numerous band of fanatics who were spread over a considerable part of the East.

At Taican, three days' journey from Badashan, Marco is much struck (and no wonder) by the mountains of salt:

Taican is a fine place, and the mountains that you see towards the south are all composed of salt. People from all the countries round, to some thirty days' journey, come to fetch this salt, which is the best in the world, and is so hard that it can only be broken with iron picks. 'Tis in such abundance that it would supply the whole world to the end of time.

CHAPTER V.

THE GEMS OF BADAKSHAN—A ROYAL PREROGATIVE—THE CONJURERS OF CASHMERE.

BADASHAN, of which our traveller wrote an interesting account, is now known as Badakshan; it lies to the north of that range of mountains which bears the name of the Hindu Kush, in Central Asia, south of Bokhara and north of Afghanistan. Marco's eyes are now turned eastward, and he writes thus of the country of which the outside world knew nothing then:

OF THE PROVINCE OF BADASHAN.

BADASHAN is a Province inhabited by people who worship Mahommet, and have a peculiar language. It forms a very great kingdom, and the royalty is hereditary. All those of the royal blood are descended from King Alexander and the daughter of King Darius, who was Lord of the vast Empire of Persia. And all these kings call themselves in the Saracen tongue Zulcarniain, which is as much as to say "Alexander"; and this out of regard for Alexander the Great.

It is in this province that those fine and valuable gems, the Balas Rubies, are found. They are got in certain

rocks among the mountains, and in the search for them the people dig great caves underground, just as is done by miners for silver. There is but one special mountain that produces them, and it is called Syghinan. The stones are dug on the King's account, and no one else dares dig in that mountain on pain of forfeiture of life as well as goods; nor may any one carry the stones out of the kingdom. But the King amasses them all, and sends them to other kings when he has tribute to render, or when he desires to offer a friendly present; and such only as he pleases he causes to be sold. Thus he acts in order to keep the Balas at a high value; for if he were to allow everybody to dig, they would extract so many that the world would be glutted with them, and they would cease to bear any value. Hence it is that he allows so few to be taken out, and is so strict in the matter.

There is also in the same country another mountain, in which azure is found; 'tis the finest in the world, and is got in a vein like silver. There are also other mountains which contain a great amount of silver ore, so that the country is a very rich one; but it is also (it must be said) a very cold one. It produces numbers of excellent horses, remarkable for their speed. They are not shod at all, although constantly used in mountainous country and on very bad roads. They go at a great pace even down steep descents, where other horses neither would nor could do the like. And Messer Marco was told that not long ago they possessed in that province a breed of horses, descended from Alexander's horse Bucephalus, all of which had from their birth a particular mark on the forehead. This breed was entirely in the hands of an uncle of the King's; and in consequence of his refusing to let the King have any of them, the latter put him to death. The widow then, in despite, destroyed the whole breed, and it is now extinct.

In the mountains there are vast numbers of sheep—

400, 500, or 600 in a single flock, and all of them wild; and though many of them are taken, they never seem to get aught the scarcer.

Those mountains are so lofty that 'tis a hard day's work, from morning till evening, to get to the top of them. On getting up, you find an extensive plain, with great abundance of grass and trees, and copious springs of pure water running down through rocks and ravines. In those brooks are found trout and many other fish of dainty kinds; and the air in those regions is so pure, and residence there so healthful, that when the men who dwell below in the towns, and in the valleys and plains, find themselves attacked by any kind of fever or other ailment that may hap, they lose no time in going to the hills; and after abiding there two or three days, they quite recover their health through the excellence of that air. And Messer Marco said he had proved this by experience; for when in those parts he had been ill for about a year, but as soon as he was advised to visit that mountain he did so and got well at once.

In this kingdom there are many strait and perilous passes, so difficult to force that the people have no fear of invasion. Their towns and villages also are on lofty hills, and in very strong positions. They are excellent archers, and much given to the chase; indeed, most of them are dependent for clothing on the skins of beasts, for stuffs are very dear among them. The great ladies, however, are arrayed in stuffs, and I will tell you the style of their dress. They all wear trousers made of cotton cloth, and into the making of these some will put 60, 80, or even 100 ells of stuff.

OF THE PROVINCE OF PASHAI.

You must know that ten days' journey to the south of Badashan there is a Province called PASHAI, the people of

which have a peculiar language, and are Idolaters, of a brown complexion. They are great adepts in sorceries and the diabolic arts. The men wear earrings and brooches of gold and silver set with stones and pearls. They are a pestilent people and a crafty; and they live upon flesh and rice. Their country is very hot.

Now let us proceed and speak of another country which is seven days' journey from this one towards the south-east, and the name of which is KESHIMUR.

The Badakshan country is still famed for its rubies, although the quality of the gems is not so high as in earlier times; and the working of the ruby mines is a monopoly in the hands of the government. By "azure" Marco means lapis-lazuli, a semi-precious stone of a beautiful blue colour, greatly esteemed by gem-workers. As for the horses that were claimed to have descended from the famous Bucephalus of Alexander the Great, we may say that many Oriental people are famous braggarts; and although the horses of Badakshan are still so beautiful and strong that Afghan robbers continually raid the country to steal them, it is unlikely that any progeny of Bucephalus were then to be found in any quarter of the world.

Keshimur, of which our traveller next speaks, is readily understood to be Cashmere, lying just south of the Hindu Kush, and famous for its shawls, attar of roses, and other products. Here is Marco's very brief account of that province:

OF THE PROVINCE OF KESHIMUR.

Keshimur also is a Province inhabited by a people who are Idolaters and have a language of their own. They have an astonishing acquaintance with the devilries of enchantment; insomuch that they make their idols to speak. They can also by their sorceries bring on changes of weather and produce darkness, and do a number of things so extraordinary that no one without seeing them would believe them. Indeed, this country is the very original source from which Idolatry has spread abroad.

In this direction you can proceed further till you come to the Sea of India.

The men are brown and lean, but the women, taking them as brunettes, are very beautiful. The food of the people is flesh, and milk, and rice. The clime is finely tempered, being neither very hot nor very cold.

There are in this country Eremites (after the fashion of those parts), who dwell in seclusion and practise great abstinence in eating and drinking. They keep from all sins forbidden in their law, so that they are regarded by their own folk as holy persons. They live to a great age.

There are also a number of idolatrous abbeys and monasteries. The people of the province do not kill animals nor spill blood; so if they want to eat meat they get the Saracens who dwell among them to play the butcher. The coral which is carried from our parts of the world has a better sale there than in any other country.

Now we will quit this country, and not go any further in the same direction; for if we did so we should enter India, and that I do not wish to do at present. For, on our return journey, I mean to tell you about India: all in regular order. Let us go back therefore to Badashan, for we cannot otherwise proceed on our journey.

The conjurers of Cashmere seem to have made a great impression on Marco, who had seen them before at the court of Kublai Khan. They had, and still have, a wide reputation for their skill. Like many other so-called magicians, they have the power of deceiving on-lookers to so great an extent that men have soberly reported that they saw iron float in the water, rocks rise in the air without being touched by any one, and clouds come and go and mists fall, all at the bidding of the magician. It is, of course, all mere jugglery.

Marco's statement that Buddhism, or "Idolatry," as he styles it, spread from Cashmere, must be taken with some allowance; for although that faith did spread thence into Tibet and other lands where it holds great power, it first went into Cashmere from India. One of the first of the Ten Obligations, or commandments, of Buddhism is to refrain from taking life; and the pious Eremites (or hermits) and Buddhists whom Marco saw, while they did not hesitate to eat meat, would not kill with their own hands the animal that was to be eaten. That is still the custom of the country; the good Buddhist will not cause death if he can possibly avoid it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD—HOW THE PAMIR COUNTRY BORDERS ON THREE GREAT EMPIRES—THE GREAT HORNED SHEEP OF THE STEPPES—A MARVELLOUS STORY OF SAMARCAND.

WE have heard much, of late years, about the Pamir country; and we shall hear more about it as time goes on: for the Pamir steppe, as it is sometimes called, lies in the heart of Central Asia, north-east of Afghanistan, south of Asiatic Russia, and west of Turkestan. Therefore it borders on the empires of Russia, China, and British India; on its lofty plains may be fought more than one battle for supremacy. It is a series of plateaus, 15,000 feet above the level of the sea; and some of its loftiest mountain peaks are 25,000 feet above sea-level. The first account of this wonderful region was written by Marco Polo, and is as follows:

In leaving Badashan you ride twelve days between east and north-east, ascending a river that runs through land belonging to a brother of the Prince of Badashan, and containing a good many towns and villages and scattered habitations. The people are Mahommetans, and valiant

in war. At the end of those twelve days you come to a province of no great size, extending indeed no more than three days' journey in any direction, and this is called VOKHAN. The people worship Mahommet, and they have a peculiar language. They are gallant soldiers, and they have a chief whom they call NONE, which is as much as to say *Count*, and they are liegemen to the Prince of Badashan.

There are numbers of wild beasts of all sorts in this region. And when you leave this little country, and ride three days north-east, always among mountains, you get to such a height that 'tis said to be the highest place in the world! And when you have got to this height, you find a great lake between two mountains, and out of it a fine river running through a plain clothed with the finest pasture in the world; insomuch that a lean beast there will fatten to your heart's content in ten days. There are great numbers of all kinds of wild beasts; among others, wild sheep of great size, whose horns are a good six palms in length. From these horns the shepherds make great bowls to eat from, and they use the horns also to enclose folds for their cattle at night. Messer Marco was told also that the wolves were numerous, and killed many of those wild sheep. Hence quantities of their horns and bones were found, and these were made into great heaps by the wayside in order to guide travellers when snow was on the ground.

The Plain is called PAMIER, and you ride across it for twelve days together, finding nothing but a desert without habitations or any green thing, so that travellers are obliged to carry with them whatever they have need of. The region is so lofty and cold that you do not even see any birds flying. And I must notice also that because of this great cold, fire does not burn so brightly, nor give out so much heat as usual, nor does it cook food so effectually.

Now, if we go on with our journey towards the east-north-east, we travel a good forty days, continually passing over mountains and hills, or through valleys, and crossing many rivers and tracts of wilderness. And in all this way you find neither habitation of man, nor any green thing, but must carry with you whatever you require. The country is called BOLOR. The people dwell high up in the mountains, and are savage Idolaters, living only by the chase, and clothing themselves in the skins of beasts. They are in truth an evil race.

This is an interesting chapter of Marco's book, because it describes a region of which the outside world knew nothing from his time until 1838, when another European traveller, Captain John Wood, passed over it, and verified the account written by Marco Polo, more than six hundred years before. The Tatars call the loftiest part of the Pamir country the Bam-i-Duniah, or "Roof of the World"; it is the highest level region to be found anywhere on the globe. It is swept by cold winds, and even in summer the dry snow is driven across its surface.

The great sheep of which Marco speaks are still to be found there, and they have been named the *Ovis Poli*, in honour of Marco Polo, who first described them. A pair of sheep horns, brought home by Captain Wood, measured three feet from tip to tip, and each horn was four feet and eight inches in length, following the curve of the horn. The animals are hunted by the Kirghiz who inhabit

the lower steppes of that country; and Wood's narrative says: "We saw numbers of horns strewed about in every direction, the spoils of the Kirghiz hunter. Some of these were of an astonishingly large size, and belonged to an animal between a goat and a sheep, inhabiting the steppes of Pamir. The ends of the horn projecting above the snow often indicated the direction of the road," which is precisely what Marco has told us. Captain Wood,

OVIS POLI.

who crossed the Pamir in February, says, whenever they came in sight of a large number of these big horns arranged in a semi-circle, they knew that there had been a summer encampment of the Kirghiz hunters.

What Marco says of the difficulty of cooking by a fire at a great height is entirely correct. Water boils at a lower temperature on the top of a high mountain than it does in the plain at its foot. The usual boiling-point is at 212 degrees, as every bright youngster knows; but on the tops of high mountains

water boils at 179 or 180, and men unused to so curious a phenomenon are puzzled to see the water boiling, and the food remaining uncooked. The pressure of the atmosphere is less on the mountain top than it is in the plain, and the heat of the fire causes the boiling of the water more quickly at the greater altitude. Water boils at the top of Mount Blanc at a temperature of 185 degrees.

MARCO TELLS A WONDERFUL STORY.

Samarcand lies in the southern part of Turkestan, just north of Bokhara, and therefore it was behind Marco Polo when he had passed the Pamir steppes: evidently, he did not visit Samarcand, and could not give us any information about the city; so he tells us this story:

Samarcan is a great and noble city towards the north-west, inhabited by both Christians and Saracens, who are subject to the great Kaan's nephew, CAIDOU by name; he is, however, at bitter enmity with the Kaan. I will tell you of a great marvel that happened at this city.

It is not a great while ago that Sigatay, own brother to the Great Kaan, who was lord of this country and of many an one besides, became a Christian. The Christians rejoiced greatly at this, and they built a great church in the city, in honour of John the Baptist; and by his name the church was called. And they took a very fine stone which belonged to the Saracens, and placed it as the pedestal of a column in the middle of the church, supporting the roof. It came to pass, however, that Sigatay died. Now the

THE MIRACULOUS COLUMN.

[*To face p.* 70.

Saracens were full of rancour about that stone that had been theirs, and which had been set up in the church of the Christians; and when they saw that the Prince was dead, they said one to another that now was the time to get back their stone, by fair means or by foul. And that they might well do, for they were ten times as many as the Christians. So they gat together and went to the church and said that the stone they must and would have. The Christians acknowledged that it was theirs indeed, but offered to pay a large sum of money and so be quit. Howbeit, the others replied that they never would give up the stone for anything in the world. And words ran so high that the Prince heard thereof, and ordered the Christians either to arrange to satisfy the Saracens, if it might be, with money, or to give up the stone. And he allowed them three days to do either the one thing or the other.

The Saracens would on no account agree to leave the stone where it was, and this out of pure despite to the Christians, for they knew well enough that if the stone were stirred the church would come down by the run. So the Christians were in great trouble and wist not what to do. But they did do the best thing possible; they besought Jesus Christ that He would consider their case, so that the holy church should not come to destruction, nor the name of its Patron Saint, John the Baptist, be tarnished by its ruin. And so when the day fixed by the Prince came round, they went to the church betimes in the morning, and lo, they found the stone removed from under the column; the foot of the column was without support, and yet it bore the load as stoutly as before! Between the foot of the column and the ground there was a space of three palms. So the Saracens had away their stone, and mighty little joy withal. It was a glorious miracle, nay, it is so, for the column still so standeth, and will stand as long as God pleaseth.

Marco was not often at a loss for real information concerning the places of which he makes mention. But in this case he was like some of the geographers, of whom the wise Plutarch speaks when he says, that they crowd into the edges of their maps parts of the world about which they know nothing, and add notes in the margin to the effect, that "beyond this lies nothing but sandy deserts full of wild beasts and unapproachable bogs." This remark moved Dean Swift, the author of "Gulliver's Travels," to say :

> So geographers, in Afric maps,
> With savage pictures fill their gaps,
> And o'er unhabitable downs
> Place elephants for want of towns.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEA OF SAND AND ITS MARVELS—THE FABLED SALAMANDER AND ITS TRUE STORY—SOMETHING ABOUT ASBESTOS.

LEAVING Turkestan, and entering China to the eastward of Kashgar and Yarkand, Marco Polo crossed the western end of the Great Sandy Desert of Gobi, or Shamo, otherwise known to the Chinese as the Sea of Sand. This vast extent of desert extends over forty degrees of latitude, and has never been fully explored even in our own day. In Marco's time it was a haunt of mystery, thought to be peopled by the strange creatures of the air. That part traversed by Marco is narrow, and he crossed it in a south-westerly direction. Here is his account of the Desert of Lop, or, as it is sometimes called, Lob :

Lop is a large town at the edge of the Desert, which is called the Desert of Lop, and is situated between east and north-east. It belongs to the Great Kaan, and the people worship Mahommet. Now, such persons as propose to cross the Desert take a week's rest in this town to refresh themselves and their cattle ; and then they make ready for the journey, taking with them a month's supply for man and beast. On quitting this city they enter the Desert.

The length of this Desert is so great that 'tis said it would take a year and more to ride from one end of it to the other. And here, where its breadth is least, it takes a month to cross it. 'Tis all composed of hills and valleys of sand, and not a thing to eat is to be found on it. But after riding for a day and a night you find fresh water enough mayhap for some fifty or a hundred persons with their beasts, but not for more. And all across the Desert you will find water in like manner, that is to say, in some twenty-eight places altogether you will find good water, but in no great quantity; and in four places also you find brackish water.

Beasts there are none; for there is naught for them to eat. But there is a marvellous thing related of this Desert, which is that when travellers are on the move by night, and one of them chances to lag behind, or to fall asleep or the like, when he tries to gain his company again he will hear spirits talking, and will suppose them to be his comrades. Sometimes the spirits will call him by name; and thus shall a traveller ofttimes be led astray, so that he never finds his party. And in this way many have perished. Sometimes the stray travellers will hear as it were the tramp and hum of a great cavalcade of people away from the real line of road, and taking this to be their own company they will follow the sound; and when day breaks they find that a cheat has been put on them, and that they are in an ill plight. Even in the daytime one hears those spirits talking. And sometimes you shall hear the sound of a variety of musical instruments, and still more commonly the sound of drums. Hence in making this journey 'tis customary for travellers to keep close together. All the animals too have bells at their necks, so that they cannot easily get astray. And at sleeping-time a signal is put up to show the direction of the next march.

So thus it is that the Desert is crossed.

Probably this tale of the desert, told by Marco Polo, was one of those which gave him a bad name among people who were ignorant of what really goes on in the midst of a vast desert. From the earliest times, men have associated deserts of land or sea with mystery; and all sorts of evil spirits were believed to inhabit the waste places of the earth. And those who heard Marco's stories, or read them afterwards, thought that they were the idle tales of Oriental romancers.

But Marco's tale is corroborated by the Chinese historian Matwanlin, who writes: "You have to cross a plain of sand, extending for more than one hundred leagues. You see nothing in any direction but the sky and the sands, without the slightest trace of a road; and travellers find nothing to guide them but the bones of men and beasts and the droppings of camels. During the passage of this wilderness you hear sounds, sometimes of singing, sometimes of wailing; and it has often happened that travellers, going aside to see what those sounds might be, have strayed from their course and been entirely lost; for they were voices of spirits and goblins." Another Chinese writer, Hwen Thsang speaks of illusions, such as visions of troops marching and halting with gleaming arms and waving banners, constantly shifting, vanishing, and reappearing. A voice behind him calls, "Fear not! fear not!" Troubled by these

fantasies on one occasion, Hwen Thsang prayed to Kwanin (a Buddhist divinity), but could not get rid of them; though as soon as he had pronounced a few words from the Prajna (a holy book) they vanished in the twinkling of an eye.

And it is undoubtedly true that strange sounds are often produced by the shifting of the sands, especially in the night, after a hot day, when the sand cools and the wind blows. It would be easy for a superstitious person to believe that these sounds were the voices of unseen creatures in the air. Sometimes the sounds are like those of a bell, or of a drum; and scientific writers have described the places where they have been heard in various parts of the world.

In the story of "The Boy Emigrants," published in 1876, the author tells of a lad who hears, in the midst of the Great American Desert, as it was once called, the nine-o'clock bell ringing in his New England home, far away. This really happened, and the author of the book actually thought he heard the bell ring. So, too, the same party of boy emigrants saw what they thought were trees, water, and lovely hills, floating just above the edge of the desert. That was a mirage; and people have seen on the sea-coast a strange apparition of towers, palaces, and lofty pinnacles, most beautiful to behold. This is a natural phenomenon, and is called the

fata Morgana. So much for this "marvellous" story, which no doubt has been called "one of Marco Polo's lies."

In what he says about the fabulous salamander we find some more truth; but he uses it to put to ridicule an ancient fable. Here is his account:

Chingintalas is also a province at the verge of the Desert, and lying between north-west and north. It is an extent of sixteen days' journey, and belongs to the Great Kaan, and contains numerous towns and villages. There are three different races of people in it—Idolaters, Saracens, and some Nestorian Christians. At the northern extremity of this province there is a mountain in which are excellent veins of steel and ondanique. And you must know that in the same mountain there is a vein of the substance from which Salamander is made. For the real truth is that the Salamander is no beast, as they allege in our part of the world, but is a substance found in the earth; and I will tell you about it.

Everybody must be aware that it can be no animal's nature to live in fire, seeing that every animal is composed of all the four elements. Now I, Marco Polo, had a Turkish acquaintance of the name of Zurficar, and he was a very clever fellow. And this Turk related how he had lived three years in that region on behalf of the Great Kaan, in order to procure those Salamanders for him. He said that the way they got them was by digging in that mountain till they found a certain vein. The substance of this vein was then taken and crushed, and when so treated it divides as it were into fibres of wool, which they set forth to dry. When dry, these fibres were pounded in a great copper mortar, and then washed, so as to remove

all the earth, and to leave only the fibres like fibres of wool. These were then spun, and made into napkins. When first made, these napkins are not very white, but by putting them into the fire for a while they come out as white as snow. And so again whenever they become dirty they are bleached by being put in the fire.

Now this, and naught else, is the truth about the Salamander, and the people of the country all say the same. Any other account of the matter is fabulous nonsense. And I may add that they have at Rome a napkin of this stuff, which the Grand Kaan sent to the Pope.

Modern geographers are uncertain as to the precise location of the province of Chingintalas; but probably it lies somewhere east of Kamul, in Chinese Tatary. The story of the salamander, an animal which could pass unharmed through the fire, is one of the oldest in the world. The ancient Greeks thought it true; and in the Middle Ages it was believed that the salamander's body was covered with a soft white wool which could be made into threads, and spun and woven into cloth. But the general belief was that the creature was like a lizard in shape; and it was said that if anybody kept a fire burning for one whole year and one day, without it ever once going out, a salamander would appear and play about in the live coals.

So far as we know, Marco Polo was the first to dispose of this fable, and tell the truth about the salamander. The stuff called by the Tatars "sala-

mander's wool" was merely asbestos, a mineral substance with a considerable fibre, which can be spun out and woven. It is indestructible by fire; and the crude mass may be cleaned and made into sheets for various purposes, such as wrapping steam-pipes and water-pipes, as is done in our own country. The salamander is heard of no more. The "ondanique," of which our traveller speaks more than once, is a very superior kind of iron ore from which the Orientals made their famous steel sword-blades, which were of so exceeding fine temper that a blade could be doubled into a hoop without breaking.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW JENGHIZ KHAN DEFEATED PRESTER JOHN—THE MYTHICAL CHRISTIAN KING AND THE MONGOL CONQUEROR—DIVINERS AND THEIR TRICKS—TATAR MIGRATIONS.

NOW we come to a fabulous personage whose existence was generally believed in by Europeans for hundreds of years and up to the time of Columbus. This was Presbyter John, a Christian prince, who was supposed to reign over a rich and powerful kingdom somewhere in Central Asia "east of Armenia and Persia," which is a pretty vague way of putting the case. Sometimes he was said to reign on the eastern coast of Africa; and his name was shortened from Presbyter to Prester. Several European potentates sent letters to Prester John, and tried to find him and his kingdom. But the mysterious Sovereign was never found. What Marco Polo says about Prester John, therefore, must be taken with many degrees of allowance for the superstitions of the time. What he says about Jenghiz Khan, however, is worthy of respect and belief; and this account of the origin of the Mongol

Empire is interesting, for it is history which Marco gives us now.

OF CHINGHIS, AND HOW HE BECAME THE FIRST KAAN OF THE TARTARS.

Now it came to pass in the year 1187 that the Tartars made them a King whose name was CHINGHIS KAAN. He was a man of great worth, and of great ability, eloquence, and valour. And as soon as the news that he had been chosen King was spread abroad through those countries, all the Tartars in the world came to him and owned him for their Lord. And right well did he maintain the Sovereignty they had given him. What shall I say? The Tartars gathered to him in astonishing multitude, and when he saw such numbers he made a great furniture of spears and arrows and such other arms as they used, and set about the conquest of all those regions till he had conquered eight provinces. When he conquered a province he did no harm to the people or their property, but merely established some of his own men in the country along with a proportion of theirs, whilst he led the remainder to the conquest of other provinces. And when those whom he had conquered became aware how well and safely he protected them against all others, and how they suffered no ill at his hands, and saw what a noble prince he was, then they joined him heart and soul and became his devoted followers. And when he had thus gathered such a multitude that they seemed to cover the earth, he began to think of conquering a great part of the world. Now in the year 1200 he sent an embassy to Prester John, and desired to have his daughter to wife. But when Prester John heard that Chinghis Kaan demanded his daughter in marriage he waxed very wroth, and said to the Envoys: "What impudence is this, to

ask my daughter to wife? Wist he not well that he was my liegeman and serf? Get ye back to him and tell him that I had liever set my daughter in the fire than give her in marriage to him, and that he deserves death at my hand, rebel and traitor that he is!" So he bade the Envoys begone at once, and never come into his presence again. The Envoys, on receiving this reply, departed straightway, and made haste to their master, and related all that Prester John had ordered them to say, keeping nothing back.

HOW CHINGHIS MUSTERED HIS PEOPLE TO MARCH AGAINST PRESTER JOHN.

When Chinghis Kaan heard the brutal message that Prester John had sent him, such rage seized him that his heart came nigh to bursting within him, for he was a man of a very lofty spirit. At last he spoke, and that so loud that all who were present could hear him: "Never more might he be Prince if he took not revenge for the brutal message of Prester John, and such revenge that insult never in this world was so dearly paid for. And before long Prester John should know whether he were his serf or no!"

So then he mustered all his forces, and levied such a host as never before was seen or heard of, sending word to Prester John to be on his defence. And when Prester John had sure tidings that Chinghis was really coming against him with such a multitude, he still professed to treat it as a jest and a trifle, for, quoth he, "These be no soldiers." Natheless he marshalled his forces and mustered his people, and made great preparations, in order that if Chinghis did come he might take him and put him to death. In fact, he marshalled such an host of many different nations that it was a world's wonder.

And so both sides gat ready to battle. Chinghis Kaan

with all his host arrived at a vast and beautiful plain which was called TANDUC, belonging to Prester John, and there he pitched his camp; and so great was the multitude of his people that it was impossible to number them. And when he got tidings that Prester John was coming he rejoiced greatly, for the place afforded a fine and ample battle-ground, so he was right glad to tarry for him there, and greatly longed for his arrival.

HOW PRESTER JOHN MARCHED TO MEET CHINGHIS.

Now the story goes that when Prester John became aware that Chinghis with his host was marching against him, he went forth to meet him with all his forces, and advanced until he reached the same plain of Tanduc, and pitched his camp over against that of Chinghis Kaan, at a distance of twenty miles. And then both armies remained at rest for two days that they might be fresher and heartier for battle.

So when the two great hosts were pitched on the plains of Tanduc as you have heard, Chinghis Kaan one day summoned before him his astrologers, both Christians and Saracens, and desired them to let him know which of the two hosts would gain the battle, his own or Prester John's. The Saracens tried to ascertain, but were unable to give a true answer; the Christians, however, did give a true answer, and showed manifestly beforehand how the event should be. For they got a cane and split it lengthwise, and laid one half on this side and one half on that, allowing no one to touch the pieces. And one piece of cane they called *Chinghis Kaan*, and the other piece they called *Prester John*. And then they said to Chinghis: "Now mark! and you will see the event of the battle, and who shall have the best of it; for whose cane soever shall get above the other, to him shall victory be." He replied that

he would fain see it, and bade them begin. Then the Christian astrologers read a Psalm out of the Psalter, and went through other incantations. And lo! whilst all were beholding, the cane that bore the name of Chinghis Kaan, without being touched by anybody, advanced to the other that bore the name of Prester John, and got on the top of it. When the Prince saw that, he was greatly delighted; and seeing how in this matter he found the Christians to tell the truth, he always treated them with great respect, and held them for men of truth for ever after.

THE BATTLE BETWEEN CHINGHIS KAAN AND PRESTER JOHN.

And after both sides had rested well those two days, they armed for the fight and engaged in desperate combat; and it was the greatest battle that ever was seen. The numbers that were slain on both sides were very great, but in the end Chinghis Kaan obtained the victory. And in the battle Prester John was slain. And from that time forward, day by day, his kingdom passed into the hands of Chinghis Kaan till the whole was conquered.

I may tell you that Chinghis Kaan reigned six years after this battle, engaged continually in conquest, and taking many a province and city and stronghold. But at the end of those six years he went against a certain castle that was called CAAJU, and there he was shot with an arrow in the knee, so that he died of his wound. A great pity it was, for he was a valiant man and a wise.

It is difficult to understand that "Christian" men were among the astrologers, who practised magical arts to find out whether the Great Khan or his adversary would be victorious in the battle which was to be

fought. We know, however, that Jenghiz Khan was one of the mighty conquerors of that age; and that he was the victor in the fight with the so-called Prester John we need have no doubt.

Rods and wands have been used for divining purposes all over the world, and in some parts of the world they are used to this day; not only in Oriental countries, where the people are ignorant and superstitious, but in England and America. Money-diggers, or men hunting for buried treasure, pretend to find the gold underground by means of 'divining-rods; and others hunt for water with wands or forked sticks from a green tree, the notion being that the stick will bend down to the earth when the "diviner" walks over an underground spring.

CHAPTER IX.

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF A STRANGE PEOPLE—CONCERNING THE TATARS AND THEIR WAYS—THE ORIGIN OF CONDENSED MILK.

MARCO is now on familiar ground, and the accounts which he gives us of the manners and customs of the Tatars, both in peace and war, are not only entertaining but true to life.

CONCERNING THE CUSTOMS OF THE TARTARS.

You should be told that all the Grand Kaans, and all the descendants of Chinghis their first Lord, are carried to a mountain that is called Altay to be interred. Wheresoever the Sovereign may die, he is carried to his burial in that mountain with his predecessors; no matter, an the place of his death were one hundred days' journey distant, thither must he be carried to his burial.

Let me tell you a strange thing too. When they are carrying the body of any Emperor to be buried with the others, the convoy that goes with the body doth put to the sword all whom they fall in with on the road, saying: "Go and wait upon your Lord in the other world!" For they do in sooth believe that all such as they slay in this manner do go to serve their Lord in the other world.

They do the same too with horses; for when the Emperor dies, they kill all his best horses, in order that he may have the use of them in the other world, as they believe. And I tell you as a certain truth, that when Mongou Kaan died more than twenty thousand persons, who chanced to meet the body on its way, were slain in the manner I have told.

Now that we have begun to speak of the Tartars, I have plenty to tell you on that subject. The Tartar custom is to spend the winter in warm plains, where they find good pasture for their cattle, whilst in summer they betake themselves to a cool climate among the mountains and valleys, where water is to be found as well as woods and pastures.

Their houses are circular, and are made of wands covered with felts. These are carried along with them whithersoever they go; for the wands are so strongly bound together, and likewise so well combined, that the frame can be made very light. Whenever they erect these huts the door is always to the south. They also have waggons covered with black felt so efficaciously that no rain can get in. These are drawn by oxen and camels, and the women and children travel in them. The women do the buying and selling, and whatever is necessary to provide for the husband and household; for the men all lead the life of gentlemen, troubling themselves about nothing but hunting and hawking, and looking after their goshawks and falcons, unless it be the practice of warlike exercises.

They live on the milk and meat which their herds supply, and on the produce of the chase; and they eat all kinds of flesh, including that of horses and dogs, and Pharaoh's rats, of which last there are great numbers in burrows on those plains.

CONCERNING THE TARTAR CUSTOMS OF WAR.

All their harness of war is excellent and costly. Their arms are bows and arrows, sword and mace; but above all the bow, for they are capital archers, indeed the best that are known. On their backs they wear armour of cuirbouly, prepared from buffalo and other hides, which is very strong. They are excellent soldiers, and passing valiant in battle. They are also more capable of hardships than other nations; for many a time, if need be, they will go for a month without any supply of food, except milk and such game as their bows may win them. Their horses also will subsist entirely on the grass of the plains, so that there is no need to carry store of barley or straw or oats; and they are very docile to their riders. These, in case of need, will abide on horseback the livelong night, armed at all points, while the horse will be continually grazing.

Of all troops in the world these are they which endure the greatest hardship and fatigue, and which cost the least; and they are the best of all for making wide conquests of country. And this you will perceive from what you have heard and shall hear in this book; and (as a fact) there can be no manner of doubt that now they are the masters of the biggest half of the world. Their troops are admirably ordered in the manner that I shall now relate.

You see, when a Tartar prince goes forth to war, he takes with him, say, one hundred thousand horse. Well, he appoints an officer to every ten men, one to every hundred, one to every thousand, and one to every ten thousand, so that his own orders have to be given to ten persons only, and each of these ten persons has to pass the orders only to other ten, and so on; no one having to give orders to more than ten. And every one in turn is responsible

only to the officer immediately over him; and the discipline and order that comes of this method is marvellous, for they are a people very obedient to their chiefs. Further, they call the corps of one hundred thousand men a *Tuc*; that of ten thousand they call a *Toman*; the thousand they call *Miny*; the hundred *Guz*; the ten *On*. And when the army is on the march, they have always two hundred horsemen, very well mounted, who are sent a distance of two marches in advance to reconnoitre, and these always keep ahead. They have a similar party detached in the rear, and on either flank, so that there is a good look-out kept on all sides against a surprise. When they are going on a distant expedition, they take no gear with them except two leather bottles for milk, a little earthenware pot to cook their meat in, and a little tent to shelter them from rain. And in case of great urgency they will ride ten days without lighting a fire or taking a meal.

They also have milk dried into a kind of paste to carry with them; and when they need food they put this into water, and beat it up till it dissolves, and then drink it. It is prepared in this way: they boil the milk, and when the rich part floats on the top they skim it into another vessel, and of that they make butter; for the milk will not become solid till this is removed. Then they put the milk into the sun to dry. And when they go on an expedition, every man takes some ten pounds of this dried milk with him. And of a morning he will take a half-pound of it and put it in his leather bottle, with as much water as he pleases. So, as he rides along, the milk-paste and the water in the bottle get well churned together into a kind of pap, and that makes his dinner.

When they come to an engagement with the enemy, they will gain the victory in this fashion. They never let themselves get into a regular medley, but keep perpetually

riding round and shooting into the enemy. And as they do not count it any shame to run away in battle, they will sometimes pretend to do so, and in running away they turn in the saddle and shoot hard and strong at the foe, and in this way make great havoc. Their horses are trained so perfectly that they will double hither and thither, just like a dog, in a way that is quite astonishing. Thus they fight to as good purpose in running away as if they stood and faced the enemy, because of the vast volleys of arrows that they shoot in this way, turning round upon their pursuers, who are fancying that they have won the battle. But when the Tartars see that they have killed and wounded a good many horses and men, they wheel round bodily, and return to the charge in perfect order and with loud cries; and in a very short time the enemy are routed. In truth, they are stout and valiant soldiers, and inured to war. And you perceive that it is just when the enemy sees them run, and imagines that he has gained the battle, that he has in reality lost it; for the Tartars wheel round in a moment when they judge the right time has come. And after this fashion they have won many a fight.

All this that I have been telling you is true of the manners and customs of the genuine Tartars. But I must add also that in these days they are greatly degenerated; for those who are settled in Cathay have taken up the practices of the Idolaters of the country, and have abandoned their own institutions; whilst those who have settled in the Levant have adopted the customs of the Saracens.

The huts in which the Tatars lived in Marco Polo's time were just like those used to-day by the wandering tribes of Central Asia. These slight houses were built of a light frame-work of osiers, or willow wands,

TATARS ON THE MARCH.

[*To face p.* 90.

bent to form a rounded, dome-like hut; and this was covered with felt, or cloth, made waterproof by being soaked in tallow or milk. Some of the larger huts were built on wheels, and when the tribe was travelling, the chiefs and their families would ride within one of these big vehicles very comfortably, if not luxuriously. One traveller, Friar Rubruquis, who saw some of the Tatars on their march, measured the space between the wheels of one of the great waggons, and found it to be twenty feet. "The axle," he says, "was like a ship's mast, and twenty-two oxen were yoked to the waggon, eleven abreast." One of the huts which Rubruquis saw was thirty feet in diameter and projected ten feet beyond the wheels.

The animals to which Marco refers as "Pharaoh's rats" were probably a species of marmot, very common in Egypt, Asia Minor, and Central Asia, and sometimes called the jerboa. Behind, it is formed like a long-legged little beast, and is a famous jumper, as is the kangaroo rat, which it closely resembles. The creature feeds on grass and roots, like the American "prairie dog," and its flesh is esteemed a delicacy.

The Tatars fought with bows and arrows of great power and weight, with which they wrought havoc among their enemies, so that they were known among the other nations as "The Archers." They made

shields and other harness for warlike purposes of leather, which had been boiled and then moulded to any desired form while it was soft and warm. This is the "cuirbouly" alluded to by Marco.

Evidently the Tatars of those far-off days knew how to condense milk, although we regard that process as a modern invention. Marco says that they dried the milk in the sun. We can understand how some of his critics would laugh at the notion that milk could be dried to a paste; but Marco is right, for it can be done, nevertheless.

Marco Polo's account of some of the other curious customs of the Tatars will be found interesting:

CONCERNING THE ADMINISTERING OF JUSTICE AMONG THE TARTARS.

The way they administer justice is this. When any one has committed a petty theft, they give him, under the orders of authority, seven blows of a stick, or seventeen, or twenty-seven, or thirty-seven, or forty-seven, and so forth, always increasing by tens in proportion to the injury done, and running up to one hundred and seven. Of these beatings sometimes they die. But if the offence be horse-stealing, or some other great matter, they cut the thief in two with a sword. Howbeit, if he be able to ransom himself by paying nine times the value of the thing stolen, he is let off. Every Lord or other person who possesses beasts has them marked with his peculiar brand, be they horses, mares, camels, oxen, cows, or other great cattle, and then they are sent abroad to graze over the plains without

any keeper. They get all mixed together, but eventually every beast is recovered by means of its owner's brand, which is known. For their sheep and goats they have shepherds. All their cattle are remarkably fine, big, and in good condition.

They have another notable custom, which is this: If any man have a daughter who dies before marriage, and another man have had a son also die before marriage, the parents arrange a grand wedding between the dead lad and lass. And marry them they do, making a regular contract! And when the contract papers are made out they put them in the fire, in order (as they will have it) that the parties in the other world may know the fact, and so look on each other as man and wife. And the parents thenceforward consider themselves sib to each other, just as if their children had lived and married. Whatever may be agreed upon between the parties as dowry, those who have to pay cause it to be painted on pieces of paper, and then put these in the fire, saying that in that way the dead person will get all the real articles in the other world.

CHAPTER X.

TIBET—THE "GRUNTING OXEN" OF THAT REGION—MUSK-DEER AND OTHER ANIMALS.

HAVING given us some description of the manners and customs of the Mongol Tatars, Marco Polo works his way south-westward toward the frontier of Tibet. In the country of Sinju (as he calls Siningfu, the Chinese city nearest the Tibetan frontier), he saw many interesting beasts and birds. In describing some of these he says:

There are wild cattle in that country almost as big as elephants, splendid creatures, covered everywhere but on the back with shaggy hair a good four palms long. They are partly black, partly white, and really wonderfully fine creatures, and the hair or wool is extremely fine and white, finer and whiter than silk. Messer Marco brought some to Venice as a great curiosity, and so it was reckoned by those who saw it. There are also plenty of them tame, which have been caught young. These the people use commonly for burden and general work, and in the plough as well; and at the latter they will do full twice as much work as any other cattle, being such very strong beasts.

In this country, too, is found the best musk in the world; and I will tell you how 'tis produced. There exists

in that region a kind of wild animal like a gazelle. It has feet and tail like the gazelle's, and stag's hair of a very coarse kind, but no horns. It has four tusks, two below, and two above, about three inches long, and slender in form, one pair growing upward, and the other downward. It is a very pretty creature. The musk is found in this way: When the creature has been taken, they find between the flesh and the skin something like an impostume full of blood, which they cut out and remove with all the skin attached to it. And the blood inside this impostume is the musk that produces that powerful perfume. There is an immense number of these beasts in the country we are speaking of. The flesh is very good to eat. Messer Marco brought the dried head and feet of one of these animals to Venice with him.

The people are traders and artisans, and also grow abundance of corn. The province has an extent of twenty-six days' journey. Pheasants are found there twice as big as ours, indeed nearly as big as a peacock, and having tails of seven to ten palms in length; and besides them other pheasants in aspect like our own, and birds of many other kinds, and of beautiful variegated plumage. The people, who are Idolaters, are fat folks with little noses and black hair, and no beard, except a few hairs on the upper lip. The women too have very smooth and white skins, and in every respect are pretty creatures.

The large animals, mentioned first in the extract we have given, of which Marco speaks as being "almost as big as elephants," are yaks, sometimes called "grunting oxen" on account of the peculiar noise they make. The yak may be tamed and used as a beast of burden; and generations of them have been

so used in Tibet and China. But the wild yak is much larger than the captive of its species, and is also very fierce, with big, curving horns, and long white hair on its lower parts. These creatures are sometimes six feet high, and seven or eight feet long.

The Chinese pheasant mentioned by our traveller is a handsome bird, specimens of which have been brought to this country since the spread of commerce between China and the rest of the world. Marco's description is not exaggerated. The feathers of the pheasant are partly golden and partly azure, mingled with a reddish brown; and the tail feathers are sometimes seven feet long. Marco's "ten palms" length was rather an understatement.

Musk-deer are still hunted on the frontiers of China and Tibet; and the musk used in the perfumery trade comes from China and Burmah, having been previously brought from the region referred to by Marco Polo. The little animal, however, has only two canine teeth, or "tusks," and not four, as described by Marco. Formerly musk was used as a medicine in various parts of the world; but doctors in civilised lands do not hold it in high repute. In China it is still thought to be a very good medicine; but the Chinese have queer notions about cures and charms. Abbé Huc, a distinguished traveller, says that when a Tatar doctor finds himself without his drugs and medicines he is not in the

CHINESE PHEASANT.

[*To face p.* 96.

least embarrassed. He writes the names of the needed drugs on slips of paper, and these, being rolled up in little balls, are swallowed by the sick man. "To swallow the name of a remedy, or the remedy itself," say the Tatars, "comes to precisely the same thing."

CHAPTER XI.

WHO WERE GOG AND MAGOG?—THE SPLENDOURS OF THE COURT OF KUBLAI KHAN—COLERIDGE'S POEM "IN XANADU."

TURNING his face again to the eastward, Marco takes us to one of the localities near the Great Wall; for although he never once makes mention of that wonder of the world, many eminent writers suppose that he had in his mind its ramparts when he speaks thus of the region which he says is Tenduc:

"Here also is what *we* call the country of Gog or Magog; *they*, however, call it Ung and Mungul, after the names of two races of people that existed in that province before the migration of the Tartars. *Ung* was the title of the people of the country, and *Mungul* a name sometimes applied to Tartars."

The Great Wall was built before the Tatars, that is Mongols, had overrun China, and was intended to keep them out. It begins at the Kiayu Pass, near the Desert of Gobi, in one of the extreme western provinces of China, and extends to the mouth of the

THE GREAT WALL AND THE RAMPART OF GOG AND MAGOG. [*To face p.* 98.

Gulf of Liau-tong, on the eastern coast, about fourteen hundred miles. Part of the way, the wall is double, and even triple, so that the actual length of the builded structure is estimated to be two thousand miles. Its height varies, but is generally about twenty feet; it is twenty-five feet broad at the base, and fifteen feet at the top. The towers which are built along the wall are three hundred feet apart, and about forty feet high. The material used is brick and stone laid up in thick walls, and filled in with earth. The part of the wall which lies to the westward has been called the Rampart of Gog and Magog.

Who were Gog and Magog? English tradition says that they were the last of a race of giants who infested England, until they were destroyed by some of the Trojans, who went to the British Isles after the destruction of Troy. Gog and Magog, it is said, were taken captive to London, where they were chained at the door of the king's palace. When they died, wooden images of the two giants were put in their places. In course of time a great fire destroyed these; but now, if you are in London, you will see in the Guildhall two immense wooden effigies of men, called Gog and Magog.

But there are other traditions of the two giants. One is to the effect that, when Alexander the Great overran Asia, he chased into the mountains of the

North an impure, wicked, and man-eating people, who were twenty-two nations in number, and who were shut up with a rampart in which were gates of brass or iron. One of these nations was Goth and another Magoth, from which we readily get the names of the mythical giants. It is probable, however, that the Turks were meant by Gog, and that the Mongols were the children of Magog. We find mention made of Gog and Magog in many books, including the Bible; but there is the Great Wall and the Rampart of Gog and Magog, whatever may have been the fact which gave the names of the two giants to that portion of the structure.

Outside of the walls, and north of Kalgan, was the summer palace of Kublai Khan, in the city of Kaipingfu, or City of Peace; and here the three Polos found the Great Khan when they first came together to visit him. The palace was called Chandu by Marco, but Xandu is believed to be the proper way of spelling the title. The traveller's description, as we shall see, is very enjoyable, and we can imagine that young Marco had a good time viewing its glories and its magnificence. He says:

And when you have ridden three days from the city last mentioned, between north-east and north, you come to a city called CHANDU, which was built by the Kaan now reigning. There is at the place a very fine Marble Palace, the rooms of which are all gilt, and painted with

figures of men and beasts and birds, and with a variety of trees and flowers, all executed with such exquisite art that you regard them with delight and astonishment.

Round this Palace a wall is built, enclosing a compass of sixteen miles, and inside the Park there are fountains and rivers and brooks and beautiful meadows, with all kinds of wild animals (excluding such as are of ferocious nature), which the Emperor has procured and placed there to supply food for his gerfalcons and hawks, which he keeps here in mew. Of these there are more than two hundred gerfalcons alone, without reckoning the other hawks. The Kaan himself goes every week to see his birds sitting in mew, and sometimes he rides through the Park with a leopard behind him on his horse's croup; and then if he sees any animal that takes his fancy, he slips his leopard at it, and the game when taken is made over to feed the hawks in mew. This he does for diversion.

Moreover, at a spot in the Park where there is a charming wood, he has another Palace built of cane, of which I must give you a description. It is gilt all over, and most elaborately finished inside. It is stayed on gilt and lacquered columns, on each side of which is a dragon all gilt, the tail of which is attached to the column, whilst the head supports the architrave, and the claws likewise are stretched out right and left to support the architrave. The roof, like the rest, is formed of canes, covered with a varnish so strong and excellent that no amount of rain will rot them. These canes are a good three palms in girth, and from ten to fifteen paces in length. They are cut across at each knot, and then the pieces are split so as to form from each two hollow tiles, and with these the house is roofed; only, every such tile of cane has to be nailed down to prevent the wind from lifting it. In short, the whole Palace is built of these canes, which serve also

for a great variety of other useful purposes. The construction of the Palace is so devised that it can be taken down and put up again with great celerity; and it can all be taken to pieces and removed whithersoever the Emperor may command. When erected, it is braced against mishaps from the wind by more than two hundred cords of silk.

The Lord abides at this Park of his, dwelling sometimes in the Marble Palace and sometimes in the Cane Palace for three months of the year, to wit, June, July, and August, preferring this residence because it is by no means hot; in fact, it is a very cool place. When the 28th day of August arrives he takes his departure, and the Cane Palace is taken to pieces. But I must tell you what happens when he goes away from this Palace every year on the 28th of August.

You must know that the Kaan keeps an immense stud of white horses and mares; in fact, more than ten thousand of them, and all pure white without a speck. The milk of these mares is drunk by himself and his family, and by none else, except by those of one great tribe that have also the privilege of drinking it. This privilege was granted them by Chinghis Kaan, on account of a certain victory that they helped him to win long ago. The name of the tribe is Horiad.

Now when these mares are passing across the country, and any one falls in with them, be he the greatest lord in the land, he must not presume to pass until the mares have gone by; he must either tarry where he is, or go a half-day's journey round if need so be, so as not to come nigh them; for they are to be treated with the greatest respect. Well, when the Lord sets out from the Park on the 28th of August, as I told you, the milk of all those mares is taken and sprinkled on the ground. And this is done on the injunction of the Idolaters and Idol

Priests, who say that it is an excellent thing to sprinkle that milk on the ground every 28th of August, so that the Earth and the Air and the False Gods shall have their share of it, and the Spirits likewise that inhabit the Air and the Earth. And thus those beings will protect and bless the Kaan and his children and his wives and his folk and his gear, and his cattle and his horses, his corn, and all that is his. After this is done, the Emperor is off and away.

But I must now tell you a strange thing that hitherto I have forgotten to mention. During the three months of every year that the Lord resides at that place, if it should happen to be bad weather, there are certain crafty enchanters and astrologers in his train, who are such adepts in necromancy and the diabolic arts, that they are able to prevent any cloud or storm from passing over the spot on which the Emperor's Palace stands. The sorcerers who do this are called TEBET and KESIMUR, which are the names of two nations of Idolaters.

There is another marvel performed by those BACSI, of whom I have been speaking as knowing so many enchantments. For when the Great Kaan is at his capital and in his great Palace, seated at his table, which stands on a platform some eight cubits above the ground, his cups are set before him on a great buffet in the middle of the hall pavement, at a distance of some ten paces from his table, and filled with wine, or other good spiced liquor such as they use. Now when the Lord desires to drink, these enchanters by their enchantments cause the cups to move from their places without being touched by anybody, and to present themselves to the Emperor! This every one present may witness, and there are ofttimes more than ten thousand persons thus present. 'Tis a truth and no lie! and so will tell you the sages of our own country who understand necromancy, for they also can perform it.

And when the Idol Festivals come round, these Bacsi go to the Prince and say: "Sire, the feast of such a god is come" (naming him). "My Lord, you know," the enchanters will say, "that this god, when he gets no offerings, always sends bad weather and spoils our seasons. So we pray you to give us such and such a number of black-faced sheep" (naming whatever number they please). "And we beg also, good my Lord, that we may have such a quantity of incense, and such a quantity of lignaloes, and"—so much of this, so much of that, and so much of t'other, according to their fancy—"that we may perform a solemn service and a great sacrifice to our Idols, and that so they may be induced to protect us and all that is ours."

The Bacsi say these things to the Barons entrusted with the stewardship, who stand round the Great Kaan, and these repeat them to the Kaan, and he then orders the Barons to give everything that the Bacsi have asked for. And when they have got the articles, they go and make a great feast in honour of their god, and hold great ceremonies of worship with grand illuminations and quantities of incense of a variety of odours, which they make up from different aromatic spices. And then they cook the meat, and set it before the Idols, and sprinkle the broth hither and thither. Thus it is that they keep their festivals. You must know that each of the Idols has a name of his own, and a feast-day, just as our Saints have their anniversaries.

They have also immense Minsters and Abbeys, some of them as big as a small town, with more than two thousand monks (*i.e.* after their fashion) in a single abbey. These monks dress more decently than the rest of the people, and have the head and beard shaven. There are some among these Bacsi who are allowed by their rule to take wives, and who have plenty of children.

The glories of Chandu, or Xandu, have been celebrated by many travellers since Marco's time. The city and the palace have long since disappeared, but one traveller saw the ruins still standing when he visited the site, towards the close of the seventeenth century. It was just after reading Marco Polo's description of the splendours of the court of Kublai Khan at Xandu that Coleridge, the poet, fell asleep and dreamed the famous poem beginning with these lines:

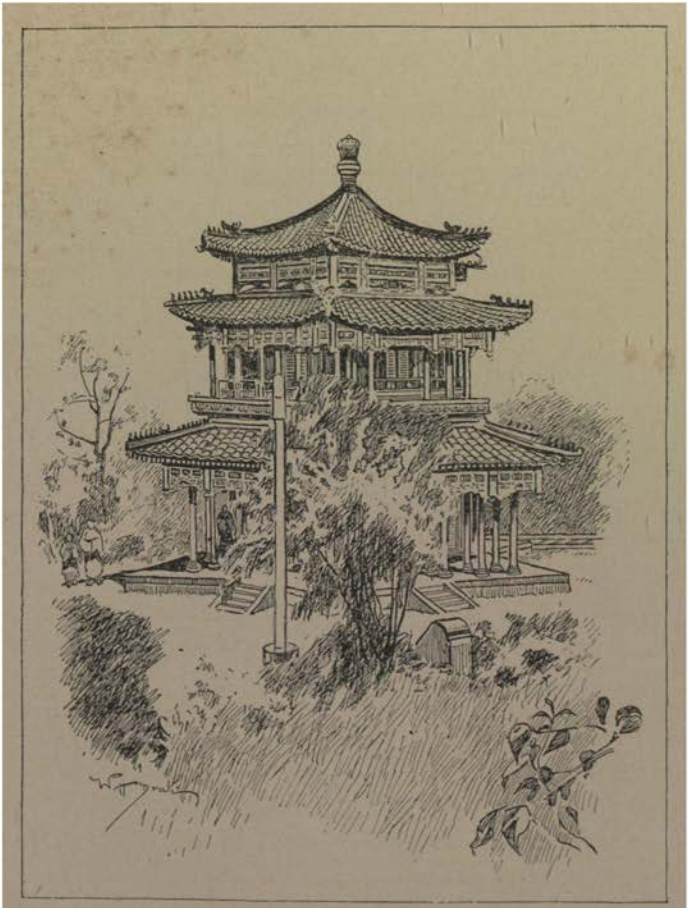
In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree,
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests, ancient as the hills,
Enfolding spots of sunny greenery.

The Chinese emperors, long after the descendants of Kublai Khan had vanished from the Celestial Empire, were in the habit of spending the hot weather at a very beautiful summer palace, far to the north of Peking, which was one of the wonders of the world. It was wantonly destroyed by the allied armies of France and England, during the war of 1860. This palace, which was filled with a vast quantity of precious objects of art and rare fabrics, was known as

the Yuen-min-Yuen. One of its pavilions may give our readers some idea of the appearance, though not of the extent, of the Great Khan's summer palace at Xandu.

The "canes" mentioned by Marco as used for building material were bamboo, of which he might well say that "it serves also for a great variety of other useful purposes."

An intelligent native of Arakan, who accompanied Colonel Yule in Burmah in 1853, used to ask him many questions about Europe, and seemed able to understand almost everything except the possibility of existence in a country without bamboos. These bamboo huts are *all* of bamboo—posts and walls, wall-plates and rafters, floor and thatch, and the withes that bind them. Indeed, it might almost be said that, among the Indo-Chinese nations, the staff of life is a bamboo. At any rate, they eat the green shoots, and of the canes in various stages of growth they make an immense number of articles, a few of which are scaffolding and ladders, fishing apparatus, oars, masts, yards, sails, cables, spears, arrows, bows, oil-cans, cooking-pots, musical instruments, footballs, bellows, paper. And in China, to sum up the whole, the bamboo maintains order throughout the empire!



A PAVILION OF THE SUMMER PALACE.

[*To face p.* 106.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRICKS OF CHINESE CONJURERS—FLYING CUPS AND AIR-CLIMBERS.

MARCO gives a full account of the wonderful tricks of conjuring which he witnessed at the court of Kublai Khan. No doubt he saw, or thought he saw the feats which he says were done before his eyes. He intended to be strictly truthful, and says, with some notion that he may be disbelieved, that these things are true, and no lie. Other and later travellers have described the same tricks, and have given no explanation of them, except to say that the spectators were probably hypnotised—that is to say, they were made to believe that they saw what did not exist. At the present day weather-conjuring is practised in China, Tatary, and India; and there are so-called conjurers, who pretend to be able to make fogs and clouds come and go.

Not many years since, a Chinese emperor found it necessary to forbid his people to offer prayers for rain after he had in vain prayed to Heaven for that

blessing. He indignantly said: "If I, offering up prayer in sincerity, have yet room to fear that it may please Heaven to leave my prayer unanswered, it is truly intolerable that mere common people, wishing for rain, should at their own caprice set up altars of earth, and bring together a rabble of Hosgang [Buddhist priests] to conjure the spirits to gratify their wishes."

The court jugglers in the time of Kublai Khan made it appear to those who looked on as if dishes from the table actually flew through the air. One of the travellers, who visited the regions of which Marco gives us some account, says: "And jugglers cause cups of gold to fly through the air and offer themselves to all who list to drink." And Ibn Batuta, a Moor who visited Cathay a century after, gives this account of a similar incident:

That same night a juggler, who was one of the Kán's slaves, made his appearance, and the Amír said to him: "Come and show us some of your marvels." Upon this he took a wooden ball, with several holes in it, through which long thongs were passed, and (laying hold of one of these) slung it into the air. It went up so high that we lost sight of it altogether. (It was the hottest season of the year, and we were outside in the middle of the palace court.) There now remained only a little of the end of a thong in the conjurer's hand, and he desired one of the boys who assisted him to lay hold of it and mount. He did so, climbing by the thong, and we lost sight of him also! The conjurer then called to him three times, but

A CHINESE CONJURER.

[*To face p.* 108.

getting no answer he snatched up a knife as if in a great rage, laid hold of the thong, and disappeared also! By-and-by he threw down one of the boy's hands, then a foot, then the other hand, and then the other foot, then the trunk, and last of all the head! Then he came down himself, all puffing and panting, and with his clothes all bloody kissed the ground before the Amír, and said something to him in Chinese. The Amír gave some order in reply, and our friend then took the lad's limbs, laid them together in their places, and gave a kick, when, presto! there was the boy, who got up and stood before us! All this astonished me beyond measure, and I had an attack of palpitation like that which overcame me once before in the presence of the Sultan of India, when he showed me something of the same kind. The Kazi Afkharuddin was next to me, and quoth he: "*Wallah!*—'tis my opinion there has been neither going up nor coming down, neither marring nor mending; 'tis all hocus-pocus!"

Mr. Edward Melton, an Anglo-Dutch traveller, who visited Java in 1670, gives a long description of the tricks of some Chinese conjurers, who performed in Batavia while he was there. After describing various other feats, he says: "But now I am going to relate a thing which surpasses all belief, and which I would scarcely venture to insert here if it had not been witnessed by thousands before my own eyes." He then goes on to describe a trick very much the same as those witnessed by Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta; and he adds: "Then straightway we saw with these eyes all those limbs creep together again, and in short time a whole man, who could at once

stand and go just as before, without showing the least damage!"

Again, we have in the Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangir a detail of the wonderful performances of seven jugglers from Bengal, who exhibited before him. Two of their feats are thus described:

(1) They produced a man whom they divided limb from limb, actually severing his head from the body. They scattered these mutilated members along the ground, and in this state they lay for some time. They then extended a sheet or curtain over the spot, and one of the men, putting himself under the sheet, in a few minutes came from below, followed by the individual supposed to have been cut into joints, in perfect health and condition, having received no wound or injury whatever.

(2) They produced a chain of fifty cubits in length, and in my presence threw one end of it towards the sky, where it remained as if fastened to something in the air. A dog, being then placed at the lower end of the chain, immediately ran up it, and, reaching the other end, immediately disappeared in the air. In the same manner a hog, a panther, a lion, and a tiger were successively sent up the chain, and all equally disappeared at the upper end. At last they took down the chain and put it into a bag, no one ever discovering in what way the different animals were made to vanish into the air.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE GREAT EMPEROR WENT TO WAR—KUBLAI KHAN'S VICTORIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST A KINSMAN—HOW THE KHAN REWARDED THE VALOUR OF HIS CAPTAINS.

YOUNG Marco devoted a great deal of his space to accounts of the Great Khan's wars and fightings, and his hunting. Evidently Marco was himself fond of sport, for he describes many kinds of game, both birds and beasts; and it is easy to see that he must have hunted somewhat himself, although he modestly avoids saying much about his own doings while he was in Cathay. His account of one of the Great Khan's battles is so vivid that we must quote what he has to say of it, as well as what he tells us of the Khan's title:

OF CUBLAY KAAN, THE GREAT KAAN NOW REIGNING, AND OF HIS GREAT PUISSANCE.

Now am I come to the part of our book in which I shall tell you of the great and wonderful magnificence of the Great Kaan now reigning, by name CUBLAY KAAN; *Kaan* being a title which signifieth "The Great Lord of Lords," or Emperor. And of a surety he hath good right to such

a title, for all men know for a certain truth that he is the most potent man, as regards forces and lands and treasure, that existeth in the world, or ever hath existed from the time of our First Father Adam until this day. All this I will make clear to you for truth, in this book of ours, so that every one shall be fain to acknowledge that he is the greatest Lord that is now in the world, or ever hath been.

CONCERNING THE REVOLT OF NAYAN, WHO WAS UNCLE TO THE GREAT KAAN CUBLAY.

Now this Cublay Kaan is of the right Imperial lineage, being descended from Chinghis Kaan, the first sovereign of all the Tartars. And he is the sixth Lord in that succession, as I have already told you in this book. He came to the throne in the year 1256, and the Empire fell to him because of his ability and valour and great worth, as was right and reason. His brothers, indeed, and other kinsmen disputed his claim, but his it remained, both because maintained by his great valour, and because it was in law and right his, as being directly sprung of the Imperial line.

Up to the year now running, to wit, 1298, he hath reigned two-and-forty years, and his age is about eighty-five, so that he must have been about forty-three years of age when he first came to the throne. Before that time he had often been to the wars, and had shown himself a gallant soldier and an excellent captain. But after coming to the throne he never went to the wars in person save once. This befell in the year 1286, and I will tell you how he went.

There was a great Tartar Chief, whose name was NAYAN, a young man of thirty, Lord over many lands and many provinces, and he was Uncle to the Emperor Cublay Kaan

of whom we are speaking. And when he found himself in authority, this Nayan waxed proud in the insolence of his youth and his great power; for indeed he could bring into the field three hundred thousand horsemen, though all the time he was liegeman to his nephew the Great Kaan Cublay as was right and reason. Seeing then what great power he had, he took it into his head that he would be the Great Kaan's vassal no longer; nay, more, he would fain wrest his empire from him if he could. So this Nayan sent envoys to another Tartar Prince called CAIDU, also a great and potent Lord, who was a kinsman of his, and who was a nephew of the Great Kaan and his lawful liegeman also, though he was in rebellion and at bitter enmity with his sovereign Lord and Uncle. Now the message that Nayan sent was this: That he himself was making ready to march against the Great Kaan with all his forces (which were great), and he begged Caidu to do likewise from his side, so that by attacking Cublay on two sides at once with such great forces they would be able to wrest his dominion from him.

And when Caidu heard the message of Nayan he was right glad thereat, and thought the time was come at last to gain his object. So he sent back answer that he would do as requested, and got ready his host, which mustered a good hundred thousand horsemen.

HOW THE GREAT KAAN MARCHED AGAINST NAYAN.

When the Great Kaan heard what was afoot, he made his preparations in right good heart, like one who feared not the issue of an attempt so contrary to justice. Confident in his own conduct and prowess, he was in no degree disturbed, but vowed that he would never wear crown again if he brought not those two traitorous and disloyal Tartar chiefs to an ill end. So swiftly and secretly were his

preparations made that no one knew of them but his Privy Council, and all were completed within ten or twelve days. In that time he had assembled good three hundred and sixty thousand horsemen and one hundred thousand footmen—but a small force indeed for him, and consisting only of those that were in the vicinity. For the rest of his vast and innumerable forces were too far off to answer so hasty a summons, being engaged under orders from him on distant expeditions to conquer divers countries and provinces. If he had waited to summon all his troops, the multitude assembled would have been beyond all belief, a multitude such as never was heard of or told of, past all counting! In fact, those three hundred and sixty thousand horsemen that he got together consisted merely of the falconers and whippers-in that were about the Court!

And when he had got ready this handful (as it were) of his troops, he ordered his astrologers to declare whether he should gain the battle and get the better of his enemies. After they had made their observations, they told him to go on boldly, for he would conquer and gain a glorious victory; whereat he greatly rejoiced.

So he marched with his army, and after advancing for twenty days they arrived at a great plain where Nayan lay with all his host, amounting to some four hundred thousand horse. Now the Great Kaan's forces arrived so fast and so suddenly that the others knew nothing of the matter. For the Kaan had caused such strict watch to be made in every direction for scouts that every one that appeared was instantly captured. Thus Nayan had no warning of his coming, and was completely taken by surprise; insomuch that when the Great Kaan's army came up he was asleep. So thus you see why it was that the Emperor equipped his force with such speed and secrecy.

OF THE BATTLE THAT THE GREAT KAAN FOUGHT WITH NAYAN.

What shall I say about it? When day had well broken, there was the Kaan with all his host upon a hill overlooking the plain where Nayan lay in his tent, in all security, without the slightest thought of any one coming thither to do him hurt. In fact, this confidence of his was such that he kept no vedettes whether in front or in rear; for he knew nothing of the coming of the Great Kaan, owing to all the approaches having been completely occupied as I told you. Moreover the place was in a remote wilderness, more than thirty marches from the Court, though the Kaan had made the distance in twenty, so eager was he to come to battle with Nayan.

And what shall I tell you next? The Kaan was there on the hill, mounted on a great wooden bartizan, which was borne by four well-trained elephants, and over him was hoisted his standard, so high aloft that it could be seen from all sides. His troops were ordered in battles* of thirty thousand men apiece; and a great part of the horsemen had each a foot-soldier armed with a lance set on the crupper behind him (for it was thus that the footmen were disposed of); and the whole plain seemed to be covered with his forces. So it was thus that the Great Kaan's army was arrayed for battle.

When Nayan and his people saw what happened, they were sorely confounded, and rushed in haste to arms. Nevertheless they made them ready in good style and formed their troops in an orderly manner. And when all were in battle-array on both sides as I have told you, and nothing remained but to fall to blows, then might you have heard a sound arise of many instruments of various music,

* Battalions.

and of the voices of the whole of the two hosts loudly singing. For this is a custom of the Tartars, that before they join battle they all unite in singing and playing on a certain two-stringed instrument of theirs, a thing right pleasant to hear. And so they continue in their array of battle, singing and playing in this pleasing manner, until the great Naccara of the Prince is heard to sound. As soon as that begins to sound the fight also begins on both sides; and in no case before the Prince's Naccara sounds dare any commence fighting.

So then, as they were thus singing and playing, though ordered and ready for battle, the great Naccara of the Great Kaan began to sound. And that of Nayan also began to sound. And thenceforward the din of battle began to be heard loudly from this side and from that. And they rushed to work so doughtily with their bows and their maces, with their lances and swords, and with the arblasts* of the footmen, that it was a wondrous sight to see. Now might you behold such flights of arrows from this side and from that, that the whole heaven was canopied with them and they fell like rain. Now might you see on this side and on that full many a cavalier and man-at-arms fall slain, insomuch that the whole field seemed covered with them. For fierce and furious was the battle, and quarter there was none given.

But why should I make a long story of it? You must know that it was the most parlous and fierce and fearful battle that ever has been fought in our day. Nor have there ever been such forces in the field in actual fight, especially of horsemen, as were then engaged; for, taking both sides, there were not fewer than seven hundred and sixty thousand horsemen—a mighty force!—and that without reckoning the footmen, who were also very numerous.

* Cross-bows.

The battle endured with various fortune on this side and on that from morning till noon. But at the last, by God's pleasure and the right that was on his side, the Great Kaan had the victory, and Nayan lost the battle and was utterly routed. For the army of the Great Kaan performed such feats of arms that Nayan and his host could stand against them no longer, so they turned and fled. But this availed nothing for Nayan; for he and all the Barons with him were taken prisoners, and had to surrender to the Kaan with all their arms.

Now you must know that Nayan was a baptised Christian, and bore the Cross on his banner; but this naught availed him, seeing how grievously he had done amiss in rebelling against his Lord. For he was the Great Kaan's liegeman, and was bound to hold his lands of him like all his ancestors before him.

HOW THE GREAT KAAN CAUSED NAYAN TO BE PUT TO DEATH.

And when the Great Kaan learned that Nayan was taken right glad was he, and commanded that he should be put to death straightway and in secret.

And when the Great Kaan had gained this battle, as you have heard, all the Barons and people of Nayan's provinces renewed their fealty to the Kaan. Now these provinces that had been under the Lordship of Nayan were four in number, to wit: the first called CHORCHA; the second CAULY; the third BARSCOL; the fourth SIKINTINJU. Of all these four great provinces had Nayan been Lord; it was a very great dominion.

And after the Great Kaan had conquered Nayan, as you have heard, it came to pass that the different kinds of people who were present, Saracens and Idolaters and Jews, and many others that believed not in God, did gibe those

that were Christians because of the Cross that Nayan had borne on his standard, and that so grievously that there was no bearing it. Thus they would say to the Christians: "See now what precious help this Cross of yours hath rendered Nayan, who was a Christian and a worshipper thereof." And such a din arose about the matter that it reached the Great Kaan's own ears. When it did so, he sharply rebuked those who cast these gibes at the Christians; and he also bade the Christians be of good heart, "for if the Cross had rendered no help to Nayan, in that It had done right well; nor could that which was good, as It was, have done otherwise; for Nayan was a disloyal and traitorous Rebel against his Lord, and well deserved that which had befallen him. Wherefore the Cross of your God did well in that It gave him no help against the right." And this he said so loud that everybody heard him. The Christians then replied to the Great Kaan: "Great King, you say the truth indeed, for our Cross can render no one help in wrong-doing; and therefore it was that It aided not Nayan, who was guilty of crime and disloyalty, for It would take no part in his evil deeds."

And so thenceforward no more was heard of the floutings of the unbelievers against the Christians; for they heard very well what the Sovereign said to the latter about the Cross on Nayan's banner, and its giving him no help.

Marco makes one or two errors in his account of the Great Khan's warlike doings. This was not the only time that the Emperor went to war in person; for the Chinese annalists tell of at least one other occasion when he led his army against his brother and rival, Arikbuga, in 1261; and in his old age he took the field against Kaidu, a rebel in the North.

Nayan, whose defeat and tragic death are so vividly described by Marco, was not the uncle of Kublai Khan ; he was no more than a cousin many times removed.

A " bartizan " was a sort of tower, made of timber, and used for purposes of defence or attack. It would appear that the Great Khan went to war in person,

THE GREAT NACCARAS.

riding in a great wooden tower, which was carried on the backs of four elephants. On an elephant was also carried the big war-drum which Polo calls a *naccara*. This was an immense kettle-drum shaped like a brass cauldron, tapering to the bottom and covered with dried buffalo hide, which had been scraped thin and tightly stretched for the drum-head. These drums were sometimes three or four feet across

at the top, and the noise from them when beaten was something terrific. Two monster drums would be slung on the back of an elephant, and the drummer, seated between the two, would beat first one and then another, when the signal was to be given to the fighting-men.

Imagine four hundred and sixty thousand soldiers, infantry and cavalry, marching to battle with the gigantic drums sounding, flags flying, troops shouting, and over all the war-banner of the great Emperor, streaming from his castle borne on the backs of four elephants. Truly that was a "parlous and fierce and fearful battle," the like of which we have never seen in our day.

Marco does not attempt to conceal his great admiration for the Khan, and takes pleasure in telling of the grand monarch's liberality and thoughtfulness for his captains and his people. Here is a characteristic chapter from our history:

HOW THE KAAN REWARDED THE VALOUR OF HIS CAPTAINS.

So we will have done with this matter of Nayan, and go on with our account of the great state of the Great Kaan.

We have already told you of his lineage and of his age; but now I must tell you what he did after his return, in regard to those Barons who had behaved well in the battle. Him who was before captain of one hundred he made captain of one thousand; and him who was captain of one thousand men he made to be captain of ten thousand,

advancing every man according to his deserts and to his previous rank. Besides that, he also made them presents of fine silver plate and other rich appointments; gave them Tablets of Authority of a higher degree than they held before; and bestowed upon them fine jewels of gold and silver, and pearls and precious stones; insomuch that the amount that fell to each of them was something astonishing. And yet 'twas not so much as they had deserved; for never were men seen who did such feats of arms for the love and honour of their Lord as these had done on that day of the battle.

Now those Tablets of Authority, of which I have spoken, are ordered in this way: The officer who is a captain of one hundred hath a tablet of silver; the captain of one thousand hath a tablet of gold or silver-gilt; the commander of ten thousand hath a tablet of gold with a lion's head on it. And I will tell you the weight of the different tablets, and what they denote. The tablets of the captains of one hundred and one thousand weigh each of them one hundred and twenty *saggi*; and the tablet with the lion's head engraven on it, which is that of the commander of ten thousand, weighs two hundred and twenty *saggi*. And on each of the tablets is inscribed a device, which runs: "*By the strength of the great God, and of the great grace which He hath accorded to our Emperor, may the name of the Kaan be blessed; and let all such as will not obey him be slain and be destroyed.*" And I tell you besides that all who hold these tablets likewise receive warrants in writing, declaring all their powers and privileges.

I should mention too that an officer who holds the chief command of one hundred thousand men, or who is general-in-chief of a great host, is entitled to a tablet that weighs three hundred *saggi*. It has an inscription thereon to the same purport that I have told you already, and below the inscription there is the figure of a lion, and below the lion

the sun and moon. They have warrants also of their high rank, command, and power. Every one, moreover, who holds a tablet of this exalted degree is entitled, whenever he goes abroad, to have a little golden canopy, such as is called an umbrella, carried on a spear over his head in token of his high command. And whenever he sits, he sits in a silver chair.

To certain very great lords also there is given a tablet with gerfalcons on it; this is only to the very greatest of the Kaan's Barons, and it confers on them his own full power and authority; so that if one of those chiefs wishes to send a messenger anywhither, he can seize the horses of any man, be he even a king, and any other chattels at his pleasure.

The tablets of gold and silver, given to special messengers and officers of the Great Khan, are frequently mentioned in Marco Polo's book. You will remember that, when the Khan sent the Polo brothers to their own country, as narrated in the first chapter of this book, he gave them a tablet of gold, on which was engraven an inscription which would procure for them all things needful for their journey through his dominions. The smallest of the tablets mentioned by Marco is said to weigh one hundred and twenty *saggi*. The *saggio* was a Venetian weight: as used by Polo, it was reckoned to be equal to about seventy-four grains troy; and this would indicate that the smallest of the golden tablets weighed eighteen and a half ounces troy.

The reader will notice that Polo refers to the

umbrella as if it were carried only by the favoured ones, who had won the special mark of approbation of their Sovereign. The history of the useful article, now so generally carried, wherever, in civilised countries, the rain or the sun is likely to interfere with the comfort of men and women, is of very ancient origin: as suggested by the text above quoted, it was, at first, probably carried only by great personages. Among some of the sculptures of old Egypt may be seen the effigies of royal princesses protected from the sun by umbrellas. In the Middle Ages, the umbrella was a large, cumbrous affair, used in Europe chiefly by the high and mighty dignitaries of the Church. But in Oriental countries, the thing was, and still is, employed as a badge of distinction, being of elaborate and costly workmanship, and richly decorated. Umbrellas of inexpensive materials for every-day use were not common in England and America until very recent times. The name of Jonas Hanway will always be connected with this use of the umbrella. Returning to England from Persia in delicate health, Mr. Hanway (who died in 1786) shielded himself from the sun by one of the outlandish "canopies," which provoked the mirth of wayfarers and excited the wrath of the drivers of hackney-coaches and the bearers of sedan-chairs, who thought they saw in this contrivance a dangerous rival to their vehicles.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BEAUTIFUL PALACE OF KUBLAI KHAN—HOW THE EMPEROR SPENT HIS TIME—CONCERNING THE MIGHTY CITY OF CAMBALUC—THE MANNER OF SERVING DINNER IN THE GREAT KHAN'S PALACE—ANCIENT AND MODERN PEKING—COSTLY ROBES.

THE personal appearance of the Great Khan is thus described by Marco: "He is of good stature, neither tall nor short, but of middle height. He has a becoming amount of flesh, and is very shapely in all his limbs. His complexion is white and red, the eyes black and fine, the nose well formed and well set on." But the portrait of Kublai Khan, drawn by a Chinese artist, does not exactly correspond with the pen portrait given here by Marco. This drawing leads us to infer that the Emperor was rather corpulent; moreover, we know, from Marco's own narrative, that he was subject to gout in his later life. After explaining that the family of the Great Khan are variously named and provided for, Marco goes on to tell of the glories of the imperial palace at Cambaluc, otherwise known as Peking:

You must know that for three months of the year, to

wit, December, January, and February, the Great Kaan resides in the capital city of Cathay, which is called CAMBALUC, and which is at the north-eastern extremity of the country. In that city stands his Great Palace, and now I will tell you what it is like.

It is enclosed all round by a great wall forming a square, each side of which is a mile in length; that is to say, the whole compass thereof is four miles. It is also very thick and a good ten paces in height, whitewashed and loop-holed all round. At each angle of the wall there is a very fine and rich palace in which the war-harness of the Emperor is kept, such as bows and quivers, saddles and bridles, and bowstrings, and everything needful for an army. Also midway between every two of these Corner Palaces there is another of the like, so that taking the whole compass of the enclosure you find eight vast Palaces stored with the Great King's harness of war. And you must understand that each Palace is assigned to only one kind of article; thus, one is stored with bows, a second with saddles, a third with bridles, and so on in succession right round.

The great wall has five gates on its southern face, the middle one being the great gate which is never opened on any occasion except when the Great Kaan himself goes forth or enters. Close on either side of this great gate is a smaller one by which all other people pass; and then towards each angle is another great gate, also open to people in general; so that on that side there are five gates in all.

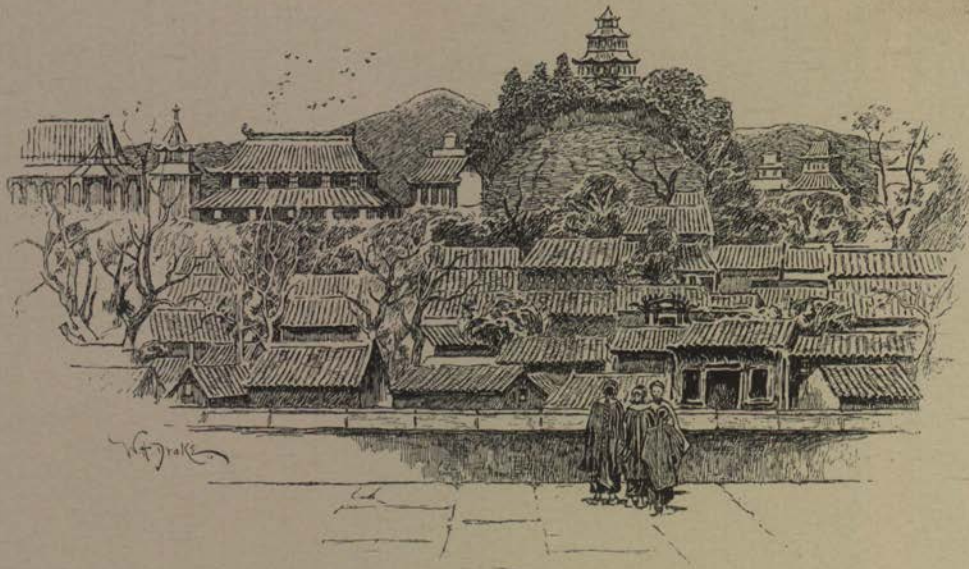
Inside of this wall there is a second, enclosing a space that is somewhat greater in length than in breadth. This enclosure also has eight Palaces corresponding to those of the outer wall, and stored like them with the King's harness of war. This wall also hath five gates on the southern face, corresponding to those in the outer wall, and hath one gate on each of the other faces as the outer wall hath also. In

the middle of the second enclosure is the King's Great Palace, and I will tell you what it is like.

You must know that it is the greatest Palace that ever was. Toward the north it is in contact with the outer wall, whilst toward the south there is a vacant space which the Barons and the soldiers are constantly traversing. The Palace itself hath no upper storey, but is all on the ground floor, only the basement is raised some ten palms above the surrounding soil, and this elevation is retained by a wall of marble raised to the level of the pavement, two paces in width, and projecting beyond the base of the Palace so as to form a kind of terrace-walk, by which people can pass round the building, and which is exposed to view, whilst on the outer edge of the wall there is a very fine pillared balustrade; and up to this the people are allowed to come. The roof is very lofty, and the walls of the Palace are all covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with representations of dragons, sculptured and gilt, beasts and birds, knights and idols, and sundry other subjects. And on the ceiling, too, you see nothing but gold and silver and painting. On each of the four sides there is a great marble staircase leading to the top of the marble wall, and forming the approach to the Palace.

The Hall of the Palace is so large that it could easily dine six thousand people; and it is quite a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides. The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior to it. The outside of the roof also is all coloured with vermilion and yellow and green and blue and other hues, which are fixed with a varnish so fine and exquisite that they shine like crystal, and lend a resplendent lustre to the Palace as seen for a great way round. This roof is made, too, with such strength and solidity that it is fit to last for ever.

On the interior side of the Palace are large buildings



THE PALACE OF THE GREAT KHAN. [*To face p.* 126.

with halls and chambers, where the Emperor's private property is placed, such as his treasures of gold, silver, gems, pearls, and gold plate, and in which reside the ladies of the Court.

Between the two walls of the enclosure which I have described there are fine parks and beautiful trees bearing a variety of fruits. There are beasts also of sundry kinds, such as white stags and fallow deer, gazelles and roebucks, and fine squirrels of various sorts, with numbers also of the animal that gives the musk, and all manner of other beautiful creatures, insomuch that the whole place is full of them, and no spot remains void except where there is traffic of people going and coming. The parks are covered with abundant grass; and the roads through them being all paved and raised two cubits above the surface, they never become muddy, nor does the rain lodge on them, but flows off into the meadows, quickening the soil and producing that abundance of herbage.

From that corner of the enclosure which is towards the north-west there extends a fine lake, containing fish of different kinds, which the Emperor hath caused to be put in there, so that whenever he desires any he can have them at his pleasure. A river enters this lake and issues from it, but there is a grating of iron or brass put up so that the fish cannot escape in that way.

Moreover, on the north side of the Palace, about a bow-shot off, there is a hill which has been made by art from the earth dug out of the lake; it is a good hundred paces in height and a mile in compass. This hill is entirely covered with trees that never lose their leaves, but remain ever green. And I assure you that wherever a beautiful tree may exist, and the Emperor gets news of it, he sends for it, and has it transported bodily with all its roots and the earth attached to them, and planted on that hill of his. No matter how big the tree may be, he gets it carried by his

elephants; and in this way he has got together the most beautiful collection of trees in all the world. And he has also caused the whole hill to be covered with the ore of azure, which is very green. And thus not only are the trees all green, but the hill itself is all green likewise; and there is nothing to be seen on it that is not green; and hence it is called the GREEN MOUNT; and in good sooth 'tis named well.

On the top of the hill again there is a fine big palace which is all green inside and out; and thus the hill, and the trees, and the palace form together a charming spectacle; and it is marvellous to see their uniformity of colour! Everybody who sees them is delighted. And the Great Kaan has caused this beautiful prospect to be formed for the comfort and solace and delectation of his heart.

You must know that beside the Palace that we have been describing, *i.e.* the Great Palace, the Emperor has caused another to be built just like his own in every respect, and this he hath done for his son when he shall reign and be Emperor after him. Hence it is made just in the same fashion and of the same size, so that everything can be carried on in the same manner after his own death. It stands on the other side of the lake from the Great Kaan's Palace, and there is a bridge crossing the water from one to the other. The Prince in question holds now a Seal of Empire, but not with such complete authority as the Great Kaan, who remains supreme as long as he lives.

Now I am going to tell you of the Chief City of Cathay, in which these Palaces stand; and why it was built, and how.

Before we take up Marco's description of the capital of Cathay, or China, let us look at Peking, to call

by its modern name Kublai Khan's city. We shall better understand Marco's pages if we know something of the capital as it exists to-day; and it is worthy of remark that the accuracy of the young Venetian's account is well established by comparing it with what we know of modern Peking.

The city is one of the oldest in the world, but was not made the capital until Kublai Khan, somewhere about 1282, fixed his court there. Under the Mongols the name of Peking was *Khan-palik*, or City of the Khan; and this title was easily converted into Cambaluc, by which name it is known in the accounts of those times. Peking is now divided into two parts; the northern portion is the Tatar city, and contains about twelve square miles; in this are the palaces, government buildings, and military barracks. The southern part is the Chinese city, and is more populous than the Tatar, less of its space being taken up by gardens and public buildings. The population is estimated at different figures; but two millions appears to be a fair estimate.

A wall separates the Tatar from the Chinese city, and a wall of varying height surrounds the whole; that of the Tatar section being about fifty feet high, and that round the Chinese section some thirty feet high. These walls are of brick and stone filled in with earth and paved on the top with slabs of stone, affording a promenade twelve feet wide. There are sixteen gates

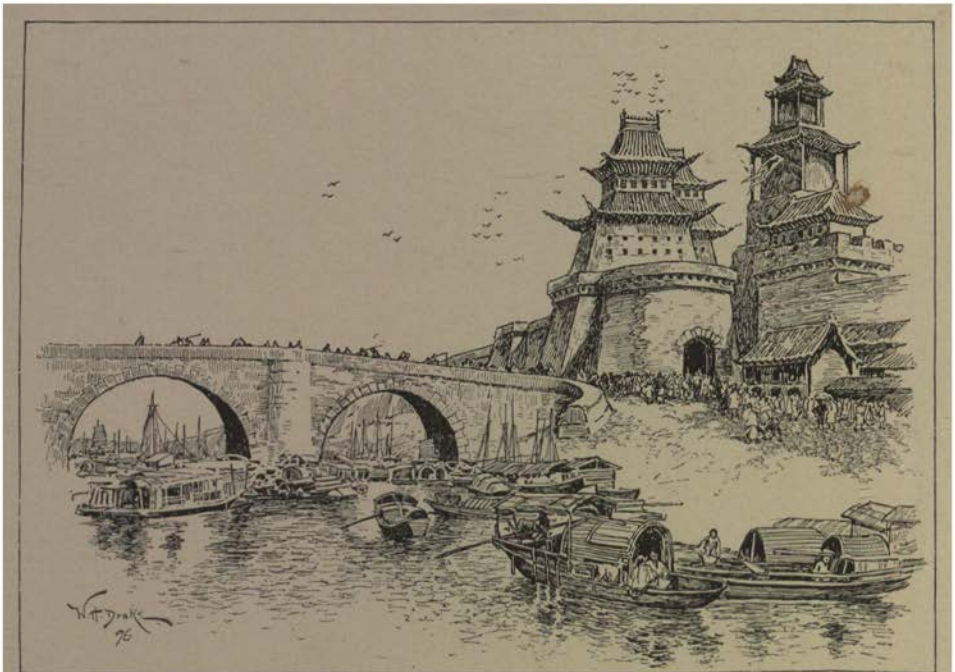
in all, and each gateway is fortified with towers of stone, other towers being fixed at intervals of about sixty yards all round the walls. These towers project fifty feet from the outer side of the walls, and those at the gateways have in front of them a fortification of a semicircular shape, so that the gate must be entered from the side, and not from the front.

The Tatar city is divided into three enclosures, each being surrounded with its own wall, and each inside of another. The innermost of these is the Prohibited City, and contains the imperial palaces and offices. Its circumference is nearly two miles; the wall is covered with imperial-yellow tiles, which look brilliant when seen from a distance. The enclosure next outside of this is occupied by the government offices, and by the army appointed to keep guard over the Emperor and his family. The next outside of this is the outermost of all, and consists of dwelling-houses and shops.

Although Polo begins his account of the chief city of Cathay with some flourish, he dismisses it, after he has described the palaces and pleasure-grounds, without many words. This is what he has to say of the capital of the empire:

CONCERNING THE CITY OF CAMBALUC.

Now there was on that spot in old times a great and noble city called Cambaluc, which is as much as to say in our tongue "The City of the Emperor." But the



THE WEST GATE OF PEKING. [*To face p.* 130.

Great Kaan was informed by his astrologers that this city would prove rebellious, and raise great disorders against his imperial authority. So he caused the present city to be built close beside the old one, with only a river between them. And he caused the people of the old city to be removed to the new town that he had founded; and this he called Taidu. However, he allowed a portion of the people whom he did not suspect to remain in the old city, because the new one would not hold the whole of them, big as it is.

As regards the size of this new city, you must know that it has a compass of twenty-four miles, for each side of it hath a length of six miles, and it is four-square. And it is all walled round with walls of earth, which have a thickness of full ten paces at the bottom, and a height of more than ten paces; but they are not so thick at the top, for they diminish in thickness as they rise, so at top they are only about three paces thick. And they are provided throughout with loop-holed battlements, which are all whitewashed.

There are twelve gates, and over each gate there is a great and handsome palace, so that there are on each side of the square three gates and five palaces; for (I ought to mention) there is at each angle also a great and handsome palace. In those palaces are vast halls in which are kept the arms of the city garrison.

The streets are so straight and wide that you can see right along them from end to end and from one gate to the other. And up and down the city there are beautiful palaces, and many and fine hostelries, and fine houses in great numbers. All the plots of ground on which the houses of the city are built are four-square and laid out in straight lines, and the plots being occupied by great and spacious palaces, with courts and gardens of proportionate size. All these plots are assigned to different

heads of families. Each square plot is encompassed by handsome streets for traffic; and thus the whole city is arranged in squares just like a chess-board, and disposed in a manner so perfect and masterly that it is impossible to give a description that should do it justice.

Moreover, in the middle of the city there is a great clock—that is to say, a bell, which is struck at night. And after it has struck three times no one must go out in the city, unless it be for the needs of a woman in labour or of the sick. And those who go about on such errands are bound to carry lanterns with them. Moreover, the established guard at each gate of the city is one thousand armed men; not that you are to imagine this guard is kept up for fear of any attack, but only as a guard of honour for the Sovereign, who resides there, and to prevent thieves from doing mischief in the town.

The "great palaces" which Marco saw over the gates and at the angles of the walls still exist, although they are now used as defences for the gates rather than as palaces. The public clock-towers were probably provided with water-clocks to indicate the hour; these were copper basins set one above the other in brickwork, like a series of steps; and the water flowing downward from one basin to another marked by its fall the flight of time. The hour was struck by the watchman on a large gong suspended in the clock-tower.

That the Great Khan maintained great state in this wonderful city, and whenever he went abroad, can well be imagined. Marco Polo tells of the twelve

thousand horsemen, or "Knights devoted to their Lord," who were continually on guard, three thousand being detailed to stand guard for three days and nights, each three thousand being then relieved by another body of like number, and so on until the entire army of knights had been on duty. Concerning the great doings in the banquet-halls of the mighty one, Polo has this glowing description:

THE FASHION OF THE GREAT KAAN'S TABLE AT HIS HIGH FEASTS.

And when the Great Kaan sits at table on any great Court occasion it is in this fashion: His table is elevated a good deal above the others, and he sits at the north end of the hall, looking towards the south, with his chief wife beside him on the left. On his right sit his sons and his nephews and other kinsmen of the Blood Imperial, but lower, so that their heads are on a level with the Emperor's feet. And then the other Barons sit at other tables lower still. So also with the women; for all the wives of the Lord's sons, and of his nephews and other kinsmen, sit at the lower table to his right; and below them again the ladies of the other Barons and Knights, each in the place assigned by the Lord's orders. The tables are so disposed that the Emperor can see the whole of them from end to end, many as they are. Further, you are not to suppose that everybody sits at table; on the contrary, the greater part of the soldiers and their officers sit at their meal in the hall on the carpets. Outside the hall will be found more than forty thousand people; for there is a great concourse of folk bringing presents to the Lord, or come from foreign countries with curiosities.

In a certain part of the hall near where the Great Kaan holds his table, there is set a large and very beautiful piece of workmanship in the form of a square coffer, or buffet, about three paces each way, exquisitely wrought with figures of animals, finely carved and gilt. The middle is hollow, and in it stands a great vessel of pure gold, holding as much as an ordinary butt; and at each corner of the great vessel is one of smaller size, of the capacity of a firkin, and from the former the wine or beverage flavoured with fine and costly spices is drawn off into the latter. And on the buffet aforesaid are set all the Lord's drinking vessels, among which are certain pitchers of the finest gold, which are called *verniques*, and are big enough to hold drink for eight or ten persons. And one of these is put between every two persons, besides a couple of golden cups with handles, so that every man helps himself from the pitcher that stands between him and his neighbour. And the ladies are supplied in the same way. The value of these pitchers and cups is something immense; in fact, the Great Kaan has such a quantity of this kind of plate, and of gold and silver in other shapes, as no one ever before saw or heard tell of or could believe.

There are certain Barons specially deputed to see that foreigners, who do not know the customs of the Court, are provided with places suited to their rank; and these Barons are continually moving to and fro in the hall, looking to the wants of the guests at table, and causing the servants to supply them promptly with wine, milk, meat, or whatever they lack. At every door of the hall (or, indeed, wherever the Emperor may be) there stand a couple of big men like giants, one on each side, armed with staves. Their business is to see that no one steps upon the threshold in entering, and if this does happen they strip the offender of his clothes, and he must pay a forfeit to have them back again; or in lieu of taking his clothes they give him a certain

number of blows. If they are foreigners ignorant of the order, then there are Barons appointed to introduce them, and explain it to them. They think, in fact, that it brings bad luck if any one touches the threshold.

And you must know that those who wait upon the Great Kaan with his dishes and his drink are some of the great Barons. They have the mouth and nose muffled with fine napkins of silk and gold, so that no breath nor odour from their persons should taint the dish or the goblet presented to the Lord. And when the Emperor is going to drink, all the musical instruments, of which he has vast store of every kind, begin to play. And when he takes the cup, all the Barons and the rest of the company drop on their knees and make the deepest obeisance before him, and then the Emperor doth drink. But each time that he does so the whole ceremony is repeated.

I will say naught about the dishes, as you may easily conceive that there is a great plenty of every possible kind. But you should know that in every case where a Baron or a Knight dines at those tables their wives also dine there with the other ladies. And when all have dined and the tables have been removed, then come in a great number of players and jugglers, adepts at all sorts of wonderful feats, and perform before the Emperor and the rest of the company, creating great diversion and mirth, so that everybody is full of laughter and enjoyment. And when the performance is over, the company breaks up and every one goes to his quarters.

The modern Chinese practice, which may have been that of the Mongols of Polo's time, is to seat at small tables (two guests at each table) any large company. In the banqueting-hall of the Great Khan

there were, probably, many rows of these small tables, among which the barons, or masters of ceremonies, moved, looking after the comfort of the guests. When the feast was over, these tables could be easily removed, for the better enjoyment of the sports that were to follow.

The Chinese of our day hold to certain observances on entering a doorway ; and among the tribes roving over Mongolia it is not only bad manners, but even sinful, to touch the ropes of a tent, which are regarded as representing the threshold. In a Mahommedan account of an embassy to the court of one of the Tatar potentates, it is recorded that it was forbidden to tread on the threshold of the palace. The reason for this prohibition is not apparent; but travellers say that, among the Mongols of the present day, the feeling about visitors meddling with the tent-ropes is so strong, that those, who have, even in ignorance, transgressed the unwritten rule, are thenceforth excluded from the hospitality of the offended family.

Marco is evidently astonished (and so are we) at the Khan's liberality to his barons in the matter of clothes ; truly it is, as he says, "a huge business." Here is the description :

Now you must know that the Great Kaan hath set apart twelve thousand of his men, who are distinguished by the

name of *Keshican*, as I have told you before; and on each of these twelve thousand Barons he bestows thirteen changes of raiment, which are all different from one another: I mean that in one set the twelve thousand are all of one colour; the next twelve thousand of another colour, and so on; so that they are of thirteen different colours. These robes are garnished with gems and pearls and other precious things in a very rich and costly manner. And along with each of these changes of raiment, *i.e.* thirteen times in the year, he bestows on each of those twelve thousand Barons a fine golden girdle of great richness and value, and likewise a pair of boots of *Camut*, that is to say of *Borgal*, curiously wrought with silver thread; insomuch that when they are clothed in these dresses every man of them looks like a king! And there is an established order as to which dress is to be worn at each of those thirteen feasts. The Emperor himself also has his thirteen suits corresponding to those of his Barons; in colour, I mean (though his are grander, richer, and costlier), so that he is always arrayed in the same colour as his Barons, who are, as it were, his comrades. And you may see that all this costs an amount which it is scarcely possible to calculate.

Now I have told you of the thirteen changes of raiment received from the Prince by those twelve thousand Barons, amounting in all to one hundred and fifty-six thousand suits of so great cost and value, to say nothing of the girdles and the boots, which are also worth a great sum of money. All this the Great Lord hath ordered, that he may attach the more of grandeur and dignity to his festivals.

And now I must mention another thing that I had forgotten, but which you will be astonished to learn from this Book. You must know that on the Feast Day a great Lion is led to the Emperor's presence, and as soon as it sees him

it lies down before him with every sign of the greatest veneration, as if it acknowledged him for its lord; and it remains there lying before him, and entirely unchained. Truly this must seem a strange story to those who have not seen the thing!

CHAPTER XV.

THE KHAN AS A MIGHTY HUNTER—HIS FALCONERS, HAWKS, AND HUNTING GEAR—RIDING IN A CHAMBER ON ELEPHANTS' BACKS—RIGHT ROYAL SPORT.

WE have already seen that Marco had a keen taste for sport, and it is noticeable that he describes the hunting-scenes of the Khan with great gusto, as if he had been present at some of them, and had a good time in the field with the imperial sportsman. This is what he has to say about the animals trained to hunt for the Great Khan :

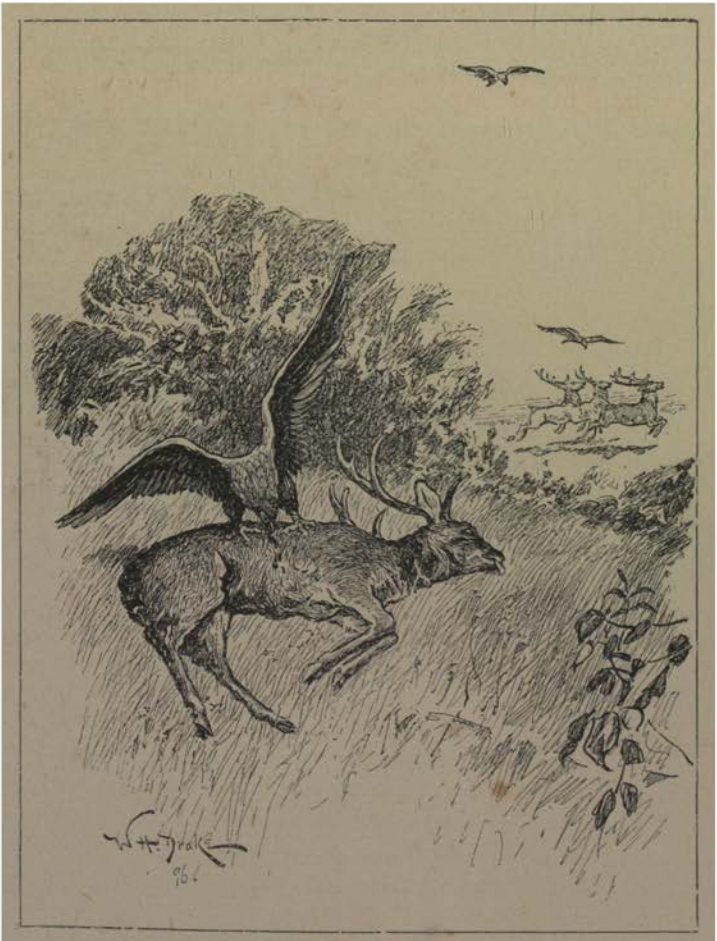
The Emperor hath numbers of leopards trained to the chase, and hath also a great many lynxes taught in like manner to catch game, and which afford excellent sport. He hath also several great Lions, bigger than those of Babylonia, beasts whose skins are coloured in the most beautiful way, being striped all along the sides with black, red, and white. These are trained to catch boars and wild cattle, bears, wild asses, stags, and other great or fierce beasts. And 'tis a rare sight, I can tell you, to see those Lions giving chase to such beasts as I have mentioned ! When they are to be so employed, the Lions are taken out in a covered cart, and every Lion has a little doggie with him. They are obliged to approach the game against the

wind, otherwise the animals would scent the approach of the Lion and be off.

There are also a great number of eagles, all broken to catch wolves, foxes, deer, and wild goats, and they do catch them in great numbers. But those especially that are trained to wolf-catching are very large and powerful birds, and no wolf is able to get away from them.

This is an accurate description of the manner of hunting still in vogue in some parts of India among the native princes. The "lion," to which Marco refers as being trained to hunt, is the cheetah, a species of leopard, which is carried to the hunting-field in a box, with its eyes covered by a hood. When loosed in the field, the cheetah will bound off in pursuit of any game which may be in sight, and seldom fails to bring it down. Hawking was a fashionable diversion in Europe during Marco's time, as well as in Cathay. Kublai Khan had hawks of various kinds taught to fly at feathered game; and his trained eagles pursued larger game, such as wolves and foxes. Here is a detailed account of the Great Khan's hunting expeditions:

The Emperor hath two Barons who are own brothers, one called Baian, and the other Mingan; and these two are styled *Chinuchi* (or *Cunichi*), which is as much as to say, "The Keepers of the Mastiff Dogs." Each of these brothers hath ten thousand men under his orders, each body of ten thousand being dressed alike, the one in red and the other in blue; and whenever they accompany the Kaan to the chase they wear this livery, in order to be



THE EAGLE AND ITS VICTIM.

[*To face p.* 140.

recognised. Out of each body of ten thousand there are two thousand men who are each in charge of one or more great mastiffs, so that the whole number of these is very large. And when the Prince goes a-hunting, one of those Barons, with his ten thousand men and something like five thousand dogs, goes towards the right, whilst the other goes towards the left with his party in like manner. They move along, all abreast of one another, so that the whole line extends over a full day's journey, and no animal can escape them. Truly it is a glorious sight to see the working of the dogs and the huntsmen on such an occasion! And as the Kaan rides a-fowling across the plains, you will see these big hounds coming tearing up, one pack after a bear, another pack after a stag, or some other beast, as it may hap, and running the game down now on this side and now on that, so that it is really a most delightful sport and spectacle.

The Two Brothers I have mentioned are bound by the tenure of their office to supply the Kaan's Court from October to the end of March with one thousand head of game daily, whether of beasts or birds, and not counting quails; and also with fish to the best of their ability, allowing fish enough for three persons to reckon as equal to one head of game.

Now I have told you of the Masters of the Hounds and all about them, and next will I tell you how the Kaan goes off on an expedition for the space of three months.

After he has stopped at his capital city those three months that I mentioned, to wit, December, January, February, he starts off on the 1st day of March, and travels southward toward the Ocean Sea, a journey of two days. He takes with him full ten thousand falconers, and some five hundred gerfalcons, besides peregrines, sakers, and other hawks in great numbers; and goshawks also to fly at the water-fowl. But do not suppose that he keeps all these

together by him; they are distributed about, hither and thither, one hundred together, or two hundred at the utmost, as he thinks proper. But they are always fowling as they advance, and the most part of the quarry taken is carried to the Emperor. And let me tell you when he goes thus a-fowling with his gerfalcons and other hawks, he is attended by full ten thousand men, who are disposed in couples; and these are called *Toscaol*, which is as much as to say, "Watchers." And the name describes their business. They are posted from spot to spot, always in couples, and thus they cover a great deal of ground! Every man of them is provided with a whistle and a hood, so as to be able to call in a hawk and hold it in hand. And when the Emperor looses a hawk, there is no need that he follow it up, for those men I speak of keep so good a lookout that they never lose sight of the birds, and if these have need of help they are ready to render it.

All the Emperor's hawks, and those of the Barons as well, have a little label attached to the leg to mark them, on which is written the names of the owner and the keeper of the bird. And in this way the hawk, when caught, is at once identified and handed over to its owner. But if not, the bird is carried to a certain Baron, who is styled the *Bularguchi*, which is as much as to say, "The Keeper of Lost Property." And I tell you that whatever may be found without a known owner, whether it be a horse, or a sword, or a hawk, or what not, it is carried to that Baron straightway, and he takes charge of it. And if the finder neglects to deliver his find to the Baron, the latter punishes him. Likewise the loser of any article goes to the Baron, and if the thing be in his hands it is immediately given up to the owner. Moreover, the said Baron always pitches on the highest spot of the camp, with his banner displayed, in order that those who have lost or found anything may have no difficulty in finding their way to him. Thus

nothing can be lost but it shall be soon found and restored without delay.

And so the Emperor follows this road that I have mentioned, leading along in the vicinity of the Ocean Sea (which is within two days' journey of his capital city, Cambaluc), and as he goes, there is many a fine sight to be seen, and plenty of the very best entertainment in hawking; in fact, there is no sport in the world to equal it!

The Emperor himself is carried upon four elephants in a fine chamber made of timber, lined inside with plates of beaten gold, and outside with lions' skins, for he always travels in this way on his fowling expeditions, because he is troubled with gout. He always keeps beside him a dozen of his choicest gerfalcons, and is attended by several of his Barons, who ride on horseback alongside. And sometimes, as they may be going along, and the Emperor from his chamber is holding discourse with the Barons, one of the latter shall exclaim: "Sire! look out for the cranes!" Then the Emperor instantly has the top of his chamber thrown open, and, having marked the cranes, he flies one of his gerfalcons, whichever he pleases; and often the quarry is struck within his view, so that he has the most exquisite sport and diversion there, as he sits in his chamber or lies on his bed; and all the Barons with him get the enjoyment of it likewise! So it is not without reason I tell you that I do not believe there ever existed in the world, or ever will exist, a man with such sport and enjoyment as he has, or with such rare opportunities.

And when he has travelled till he reaches a place called CACHAR MODUN, there he finds his tents pitched, with the tents of his Sons, and his Barons, and those of his ladies and theirs, so that there shall be full ten thousand tents in all, and all fine and rich ones. And I will tell you how his own quarters are disposed. The tent in which he holds his courts is large enough to give cover easily to one

thousand souls. It is pitched with its door to the south, and the Barons and Knights remain in waiting on it, whilst the Kaan abides in another close to it on the west side. When he wishes to speak with any one, he causes the person to be summoned to that other tent. Immediately behind the Great Tent there is a fine large chamber where the Kaan sleeps; and there are also many other tents and chambers, but they are not in contact with the Great Tent as these are. The two audience-tents and the sleeping-chamber are constructed in this way. Each of the audience-tents has three poles, which are of spice-wood, and are most artfully covered with lions' skins, striped with black and white and red, so that they do not suffer from any weather. All three apartments are also covered outside with similar skins of striped lions, a substance that lasts for ever. And inside they are all lined with ermine and sable, these two being the finest and most costly furs in existence. For a robe of sable, large enough to line a mantle, is worth two thousand bezants of gold, or one thousand at least, and this kind of skin is called by the Tartars "The King of Furs." The beast itself is about the size of a marten. These two furs of which I speak are applied and inlaid so exquisitely, that it is really something worth seeing. All the tent-ropes are of silk. And, in short, I may say that those tents, to wit the two audience-halls and the sleeping-chamber, are so costly that it is not every king could pay for them.

Round about these tents are others, also fine ones and beautifully pitched, in which are the Emperor's ladies, and the ladies of the other princes and officers. And then there are the tents for the hawks and their keepers, so that altogether the number of tents there on the plain is something wonderful. To see the many people that are thronging to and fro on every side and every day there, you would take the camp for a good big city. For you must reckon the Leeches [doctors], and the Astrologers, and the

PART OF THE KHAN'S ENCAMPMENT. [*To face p.* 144.

Falconers, and all the other attendants on so great a company; and add that everybody there has his whole family with him, for such is their custom.

The Kaan remains encamped there until the spring, and all that time he does nothing but go hawking round about among the cane-brakes along the lakes and rivers that abound in that region, and across fine plains on which are plenty of cranes and swans, and all sorts of other fowl. The other gentry of the camp also are never done with hunting and hawking, and every day they bring home great store of venison and feathered game of all sorts. Indeed, without having witnessed it, you would never believe what quantities of game are taken, and what marvellous sport and diversion they all have whilst they are in camp there.

There is another thing I should mention; to wit, that for twenty days' journey round the spot nobody is allowed, be he who he may, to keep hawks or hounds, though anywhere else whosoever list may keep them. And furthermore, throughout all the Emperor's territories, nobody, however audacious, dares to hunt any of these four animals, to wit, hare, stag, buck, and roe, from the month of March to the month of October. Anybody who should do so would rue it bitterly. But those people are so obedient to the Kaan's commands, that even if a man were to find one of those animals asleep by the roadside he would not touch it for the world! And thus the game multiplies at such a rate that the whole country swarms with it, and the Emperor gets as much as he could desire. Beyond the term I have mentioned, however, to wit, that from March to October, everybody may take these animals as he lists.

After the Emperor has tarried in that place, enjoying his sport as I have related, from March to the middle of May, he moves with all his people, and returns straight to his capital city of Cambaluc (which is also the capital of Cathay, as you have been told), but all the while

continuing to take his diversion in hunting and hawking as he goes along.

In those days, hunting with hawks and falcons was called a royal sport, although we should consider it rather cruel to chase the birds of the air with fierce birds of prey, who are the natural enemies of the game birds. But that was certainly a royal manner of hunting in which Kublai Khan went to the field. Carried in a fine chamber lined with gold and covered with choice skins, and borne by a double team of elephants, Kublai Khan had only to sit and view the scenery until called by his barons to look out for the game that had been scared up for him. No wonder that Marco exclaims in his enthusiasm, that he does not believe that any other man in the world had such rare opportunities for sport! But the great Emperor had one drawback, which must have reminded him that he was, after all, only a common mortal: with all his magnificence, riches, and opportunities for enjoyment, this gorgeous monarch had the gout!

CHAPTER XVI.

KUBLAI'S FINANCES AND GOVERNMENT—THE GREAT KHAN AS A MONEY-SPINNER — PRINTING MONEY TO ORDER — THE EMPEROR'S VALUABLE MONOPOLIES—THE TWELVE BARONS AND THEIR POWERS—POST-RUNNERS WHO TRAVEL FAST —BURNING "BLACK STONES" FOR FUEL — THE KHAN'S PATRIARCHAL RULE.

THE Great Khan's method for supplying himself with the money needed to maintain his splendid state and magnificent expenditure must needs have excited the admiration of Marco Polo. It appears that the Khan had hit on the scheme of manufacturing paper money, and, contrary to the usages of modern times, the paper money of the Khan did not represent gold and silver lying in the vaults of the imperial treasury. The Khan's officials printed their money on a soft fabric made from the inner bark of the mulberry tree, a paper-like substance which is still used in China and Japan instead of the paper made from linen or cotton. The fabric was cut into pieces of different sizes, and on each piece was printed the value to be placed on the note; and Marco says, that each bit of paper was issued with as

much solemnity and authority as if it were pure gold or silver : on every piece, he adds, "a variety of officials, whose duty it is, have to write their names, and to put their seals. And when all is prepared duly, the chief officer deputed by the Kaan smears the seal entrusted to him with vermilion, and impresses it upon the paper, so that the form of the seal remains stamped upon it in red ; the money is then authentic. Any one forging it would be punished with death. And the Kaan causes every year to be made such a vast quantity of this money, which costs him nothing, that it must equal in amount all the treasure in the world." Curiously enough, the place in which this paper money was manufactured was called "The Mint." Usually, a mint is an establishment in which metal is coined into money.

By an imperial edict, as we may presume, the Great Khan caused his paper currency to be accepted as money "universally over all his kingdoms and provinces and territories, and whithersoever his power and sovereignty extends." It must have been a fine thing to be able to make money from paper, and then, by imperial command, under penalty of death, put it into circulation. For Marco tells us that these notes were all taken by the people without question ; he adds : "And nobody, however important he may think himself, dares to refuse them, on pain of death."

Not only did the Emperor make his own money in

such quantities as he desired, but he had the monopoly of the markets for all sorts of valuable and costly commodities. And this was the way in which the business of buying and selling was managed in the Great Khan's capital:

Furthermore, all merchants arriving from India or other countries, and bringing with them gold or silver or gems and pearls, are prohibited from selling to any one but the Emperor. He has twelve experts chosen for this business, men of shrewdness and experience in such affairs; these appraise the articles, and the Emperor then pays a liberal price for them in those pieces of paper. The merchants accept his price readily, for in the first place they would not get so good an one from anybody else, and secondly they are paid without any delay. And with this paper money they can buy what they like anywhere over the Empire, whilst it is also vastly lighter to carry about on their journeys. And it is a truth that the merchants will several times in the year bring wares to the amount of four hundred thousand bezants, and the Grand Sire pays for all in that paper. So he buys such a quantity of those precious things every year that his treasure is endless, whilst all the time the money he pays away costs him nothing at all. Moreover, several times in the year proclamation is made through the city that any one who may have gold or silver or gems or pearls, by taking them to the Mint, shall get a handsome price for them. And the owners are glad to do this, because they would find no other purchaser give so large a price. Thus the quantity they bring in is marvellous, though those who do not choose to do so may let it alone. Still, in this way, nearly all the valuables in the country come into the Kaan's possession.

When any of those pieces of paper are spoilt—not that

they are so very flimsy neither—the owner carries them to the Mint, and by paying 3 per cent. on the value he gets new pieces in exchange. And if any Baron or any one else soever hath need of gold or silver or gems or pearls, in order to make plate or girdles or the like, he goes to the Mint and buys as much as he lists, paying in this paper money.

The bezant of Marco Polo's time was a gold coin which originated in Constantinople during the existence of the Byzantine Empire, from which mighty power it derives its common name; for the true title of the coin was the *solidus*; it was about equal to the dinar in value; or, to give a more modern comparison, a bezant was equal in value to one ounce of silver. But, in reckoning the value of the silver in Marco's time, we should bear in mind that the relation of gold to silver was not as it is now; it was about ten to one. History records that the Mongol dynasty, for years after Marco Polo's time, kept up the policy of issuing unlimited quantities of paper money; and in the end, this practice was the cause of many financial disasters and much commercial distress. But we must not infer that paper money was exclusively used by Kublai Khan. Similar notes were issued by the Chinese as early as the ninth century; and before Marco was born, money made of stamped leather was current in Italy. The Japanese also used paper money before the days of Kublai Khan.

Marco Polo spent so much time at the court of Kublai Khan, that he not only became very familiar with the conduct of affairs in that vast empire, but appears to have been filled with admiration for the methods pursued by the Sovereign. Here is some account of the Khan's system of government and his management of his people:

CONCERNING THE TWELVE BARONS WHO ARE SET OVER ALL THE AFFAIRS OF THE GREAT KAAN.

You must know that the Great Kaan hath chosen twelve great Barons, to whom he hath committed all the necessary affairs of thirty-four great provinces; and now I will tell you particulars about them and their establishments.

You must know that these twelve Barons reside altogether in a very rich and handsome palace, which is inside the city of Cambaluc, and consists of a variety of edifices, with many suites of apartments. To every province is assigned a judge and several clerks, and all reside in this palace, where each has his separate quarters. These judges and clerks administer all the affairs of the provinces to which they are attached, under the direction of the twelve Barons. Howbeit, when an affair is of very great importance, the twelve Barons lay it before the Emperor, and he decides as he thinks best. But the power of those twelve Barons is so great that they choose the governors for all those thirty-four great provinces that I have mentioned, and only after they have chosen do they inform the Emperor of their choice. This he confirms, and grants to the person nominated a tablet of gold such as is appropriate to the rank of his government.

Those twelve Barons also have such authority that they

can dispose of the movements of the forces, and send them whither, and in such strength as, they please. This is done indeed with the Emperor's cognisance, but still the orders are issued on their authority. They are styled SHIENG, which is as much as to say "The Supreme Court," and the palace where they abide is also called *Shieng*. This body forms the highest authority at the Court of the Great Kaan; and indeed they can favour and advance whom they will. I will not now name the thirty-four provinces to you, because they will be spoken of in detail in the course of this Book.

HOW THE KAAN'S POSTS AND RUNNERS ARE SPED THROUGH MANY LANDS AND PROVINCES.

Now you must know that from this city of Cambaluc proceed many roads and highways leading to a variety of provinces, one to one province, another to another; and each road receives the name of the province to which it leads; and it is a very sensible plan. And the messengers of the Emperor in travelling from Cambaluc, be the road whichsoever they will, find at every twenty-five miles of the journey a station which they call *Yamb*, or, as we should say, the "Horse-Post-House." And at each of those stations used by the messengers there is a large and handsome building for them to put up at, in which they find all the rooms furnished with fine beds and all other necessary articles in rich silk, and where they are provided with everything they can want. If even a king were to arrive at one of these, he would find himself well lodged.

At some of these stations, moreover, there shall be posted some four hundred horses standing ready for the use of the messengers; at others there shall be two hundred, according to the requirements, and to what the

Emperor has established in each case. At every twenty-five miles, as I said, or anyhow at every thirty miles, you find one of these stations, on all the principal highways leading to the different provincial governments; and the same is the case throughout all the chief provinces subject to the Great Kaan. Even when the messengers have to pass through a roadless tract where neither house nor hostel exists, still there the station-houses have been established just the same, excepting that the intervals are somewhat greater, and the day's journey is fixed at thirty-five to forty-five miles, instead of twenty-five to thirty. But they are provided with horses and all the other necessaries just like those we have described, so that the Emperor's messengers, come they from what region they may, find everything ready for them.

And in sooth this is a thing done on the greatest scale of magnificence that ever was seen. Never had emperor, king, or lord such wealth as this manifests! For it is a fact that on all these posts taken together there are more than three hundred thousand horses kept up, specially for the use of the messengers. And the great buildings that I have mentioned are more than ten thousand in number, all richly furnished as I have told you. The thing is on a scale so costly and wonderful that it is hard to bring oneself to describe it.

But now I will tell you of another thing that I had forgotten, but which ought to be told whilst I am on this subject. You must know that by the Great Kaan's orders there has been established between those post-houses at every interval of three miles a little fort with some forty houses round about it, in which dwell the people who act as the Emperor's foot-runners. Every one of those runners wears a great wide belt, set all over with bells, so that as they run the three miles from post to post their bells are heard jingling a long way off. And thus on reaching the

post the runner finds another man similarly equipped, and all ready to take his place, who instantly takes over whatsoever he has in charge, and with it receives a slip of paper from the clerk who is always on hand for the purpose; and so the new man sets off and runs his three miles. At the next station he finds his relief ready in like manner; and so the post proceeds, with a change at every three miles. And in this way the Emperor, who has an immense number of these runners, receives despatches with news from places ten days' journey off in one day and night; or, if need be, news from a hundred days' off in ten days and nights; and that is no small matter!

In fact, in the fruit season many a time fruit shall be gathered one morning in Cambaluc, and in the evening of the next day it shall reach the Great Kaan at Chandu, a distance of ten days' journey. The clerk at each of the posts notes the time of each courier's arrival and departure; and there are often other officers whose business it is to make monthly visitations of all the posts, and to punish those runners who have been slack in their work. The Emperor exempts these men from all tribute and pays them besides.

Moreover, there are also at those stations other men equipped similarly with girdles hung with bells, who are employed for expresses when there is call for great haste in sending despatches to any governor of a province, or to give news when any baron has revolted, or in other such emergencies; and these men travel a good two hundred or three hundred miles in the day, and as much in the night. I'll tell you how it stands. They take a horse from those at the station which are standing ready saddled, all fresh and in wind, and mount and go at full speed, as hard as they can ride in fact. And when those at the next post hear the bells, they get ready another horse and a man equipped in the same way, and he takes over the

letter or whatever it be, and is off full speed to the third station, where again a fresh horse is found all ready, and so the despatch speeds along from post to post, always at full gallop with regular change of horses. And the speed at which they go is marvellous. By night, however, they cannot go so fast as by day, because they have to be accompanied by footmen with torches, who could not keep up with them at full speed.

Those men are highly prized; and they could never do it did they not bind hard the stomach, chest, and head with strong bands. And each of them carries with him a gerfalcon tablet, in sign that he is bound on an urgent express; so that if perchance his horse break down, or he meet with other mishap, whomsoever he may fall in with on the road, he is empowered to make him dismount and give up his horse. Nobody dares refuse in such a case; so that the courier hath always a good fresh nag to carry him.

The system of posting, of which we have this minute and lucid account, though in existence in the time of Kublai Khan, was not originated by that monarch; it was employed by all the Oriental nations, and is in vogue to-day in Northern China, Japan, and other countries, where the railway and the telegraph have not yet penetrated the vast spaces that lie between the large cities. The Japanese runners are very fleet; and when one of them starts off on a long errand, he first strips himself of all clothing except a cloth around his loins: with his light burden slung to a stick over his shoulder, he will make seven miles an hour for several consecutive hours. In Burmah

the kings were accustomed to have delicacies brought by horse-posts from distant points to their capital at Ava; and Colonel Yule tells how one of the caliphs of Cairo in the tenth century, who had a longing for some of the cherries of Baalbek, was served by his vizier. The vizier, hearing of the wish expressed by his master, caused six hundred pigeons to be let loose in Baalbek, their home being in Cairo; and to each leg of each bird was attached a small silken bag with one cherry therein. So that the gratified caliph, if all the pigeons came home, was served with twelve hundred cherries.

In Marco Polo's time very little was known in Europe concerning coal as a fuel. But although mineral coal is more generally used in Europe and America than it is in China, there are vast deposits of this material in China, where it was used as a fuel long before our Venetian traveller visited that country. Here is his account of "the black stones" which so much excited his admiration:

CONCERNING THE BLACK STONES THAT ARE DUG IN CATHAY, AND ARE BURNT FOR FUEL.

It is a fact that all over the country of Cathay there is a kind of black stone existing in beds in the mountains, which they dig out and burn like firewood. If you supply a fire with them at night, and see that they are well kindled, you will find them still alight in the morning; and they make such capital fuel that no other is used throughout

the country. It is true that they have plenty of wood also, but they do not burn it, because these stones burn better and cost less.

It is said that coal exists in every province of China, but it is most plentiful in Northern China, where there are inexhaustible beds of anthracite; and the people use it (as Marco says) in preference to any other kind of fuel. The unwillingness of the Chinese Government to allow large commercial enterprises to be undertaken by foreigners has prevented any liberal opening of these coal mines, and the people only mine the deposits in a feeble and fitful way. If any one should wonder at Marco's apparent ignorance of the true nature of mineral coal, he should remember that coal was not burnt in the South of Europe, where our traveller spent his youth, until very recent times. Even up to late days coal was known in England, where it was first used, as "stone coal," to distinguish it from charcoal. As far back as A.D. 850 mention is made, in the records of Peterborough Abbey, of "fossil fuel"; and it is believed that the Romans learned from the ancient Britons the uses of this kind of fuel. Nevertheless, coal was not commonly used in London until 1240, some forty years before the time of Marco Polo; and as communication between London and Venice was tedious and uncertain, it was not surprising that the Venetians knew nothing of coal as a fuel.

The present form of government in China is beneficent and patriarchal in theory, but by no means so benevolent in practice, as it would appear to one who reads only a Chinese version of political affairs in that empire. Apparently, under Kublai Khan the administration of the government was really what the present government professes to be, as will be seen in the following account taken from Polo's book:

HOW THE GREAT KAAN CAUSES STORES OF CORN TO BE MADE, TO HELP HIS PEOPLE WITHAL IN TIME OF DEARTH.

You must know that when the Emperor sees that the corn is cheap and abundant he buys up large quantities, and has it stored in all his provinces and great granaries, where it is so well looked after that it will keep for three or four years.

And this applies, let me tell you, to all kinds of corn, whether wheat, barley, millet, rice, panic, or what not; and when there is any scarcity of a particular kind of corn he causes that to be issued. And if the price of the corn is at one bezant the measure, he lets them have it at a bezant for four measures, or at whatever price will produce general cheapness; and every one can have food in this way. And by this providence of the Emperor's his people can never suffer from dearth. He does the same over his whole Empire, causing these supplies to be stored everywhere according to calculation of the wants and necessities of the people.

OF THE CHARITY OF THE EMPEROR TO THE POOR.

I have told you how the Great Kaan provides for the distribution of necessaries to his people in time of dearth by making store in time of cheapness. Now I will tell you of his alms and great charity to the poor of his city of Cambaluc.

You see he causes selection to be made of a number of families in the city which are in a state of indigence, and of such families some may consist of six in the house, some of eight, some of ten, more or fewer in each as it may hap, but the whole number being very great. And each family he causes annually to be supplied with wheat and other corn sufficient for the whole year. And this he never fails to do every year. Moreover, all those who choose to go to the daily dole at the Court receive a great loaf apiece hot from the baking, and nobody is denied; for so the Lord hath ordered. And so some thirty thousand people go for it every day from year's end to year's end. Now this is a great goodness in the Emperor to take pity of his poor people thus! And they benefit so much by it that they worship him as he were God.

He also provides the poor with clothes. For he lays a tithe upon all wool, silk, hemp, and the like from which clothing can be made; and he has these woven and laid up in a building set apart for the purpose; and as all artisans are bound to give a day's labour weekly, in this way the Kaan has these stuffs made into clothing for those poor families, suitable for summer or winter, according to the time of year. He also provides the clothing for his troops, and has woollens woven for them in every city, the material for which is furnished by the tithe aforesaid. You should know that the Tartars, before they were converted to the religion of the Idolaters, never practised almsgiving. Indeed, when any poor man begged of them they would tell

him: "Go with God's curse, for if He loved you as He loves me He would have provided for you!" But the sages of the Idolaters, and especially the *Bacsis* mentioned before, told the Great Kaan that it was a good work to provide for the poor, and that his idols would be greatly pleased if he did so. And since then he has taken to do for the poor so much as you have heard.

CONCERNING THE VIEWS OF THE CATHAYANS [CHINESE] AS TO THE SOUL, AND THEIR CUSTOMS.

Their view of the immortality of the soul is after this fashion: They believe that as soon as a man dies his soul enters into another body, going from a good to a better, or from a bad to a worse, according as he hath conducted himself well or ill. That is to say, a poor man, if he have passed through life good and sober, shall be born again of a gentlewoman, and shall be a gentleman; and on a second occasion shall be born of a princess, and shall be a prince, and so on, always rising, till he be absorbed into the Deity. But if he have borne himself ill, he who was the son of a gentleman shall be reborn as the son of a boor, and from a boor shall become a dog, always going down lower and lower.

The people have an ornate style of speech; they salute each other with a cheerful countenance, and with great politeness; they behave like gentlemen, and eat with great propriety. They show great respect to their parents; and should there be any son who offends his parents, or fails to minister to their necessities, there is a public office which has no other charge but that of punishing unnatural children, who are proved to have acted with ingratitude towards their parents.

Criminals of sundry kinds who have been imprisoned are released at a time fixed by the Great Kaan (which

occurs every three years), but on leaving prison they are branded on one cheek, that they may be recognised.

The Great Kaan hath prohibited all gambling and sharping, things more prevalent there than in any other part of the world. In doing this, he said: "I have conquered you by force of arms, and all that you have is mine; if, therefore, you gamble away your property, it is in fact my property that you are gambling away." Not that he took anything from them, however.

I must not omit to tell you of the orderly way in which the Kaan's Barons and others conduct themselves in coming to his presence. In the first place, within a half-mile of the place where he is, out of reverence for his exalted majesty, everybody preserves a mien of the greatest meekness and quiet, so that no noise of shrill voices or loud talk shall be heard.

We may here add Marco's account of the way in which the year of the Great Khan is spent:

On arriving at his capital of Cambaluc, he stays in his palace three days and no more, during which time he has great court entertainments and rejoicings. He then quits his palace at Cambaluc, and proceeds to that city which he has built, as I told you before, and which is called Chandu, where he has that grand park and palace of cane. There he spends the summer, to escape the heat, for the situation is a very cool one. After stopping there from the beginning of May to the 28th of August, he takes his departure, and returns to his capital Cambaluc. There he stops the month of September to keep his Birthday Feast, and also throughout October, November, December, January, and February, in which last month he keeps the grand feast of the New Year, which they call the White

Feast. He then sets out on his march towards the Ocean Sea, hunting and hawking, and continues out from the beginning of March to the middle of May; and then comes back for three days only to the capital, during which he makes merry, and holds a great court and grand entertainments. In truth, 'tis something astonishing, the magnificence displayed by the Emperor in those three days; and then he starts off again as you know.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GOLDEN KING AND PRESTER JOHN—THE FAMED YELLOW RIVER —SOME OF THE WONDERS OF YUNNAN—THE TRAVELLER MEETS WITH CROCODILES—"THE PEOPLE OF THE GOLD TEETH"—CURIOSITIES OF TATTOOING—A FAMOUS BATTLE —THE CITY OF MIEN.

MARCO, having told his readers many wonderful things about Kublai Khan and his court and people, then addressed himself to the narration of some of his adventures in travelling about the great Mongolian Empire. This part of his book he begins by saying:

Now you must know that the Emperor sent the aforesaid Marco Polo, who is the author of this whole story, on business of his into the Western Provinces. On that occasion he travelled from Cambaluc a good four months' journey toward the west. And so now I will tell you all that he saw on his travels as he went and returned.

The journey which Marco took was along the boundary of Cathay, or China, nearest to the Indian Empire; the provinces of the Mongolian Empire through which he passed are now known as Shansi, Szechwan, and Tibet. We are not able to find on a modern map all the places of which Marco makes

mention in his account of his journey through the Western Provinces. But some of the names of cities are found easily enough. For example, Pianfu, one of the cities first mentioned in Marco's journal, was undoubtedly Pingyangfu, as the city is now called. We are not so certain about Chaicu, which lies two days' ride farther west.

Here, Marco says, is "a noble castle, built in time past by a king of that country, whom they used to call the Golden King," and then relates this story:

Now I will tell you a pretty passage that befell between this Golden King and Prester John, as it was related by the people of the Castle.

It came to pass, as they told the tale, that this Golden King was at war with Prester John. And the King held a position so strong that Prester John was not able to get at him or to do him any scathe; wherefore he was in great wrath. So seventeen gallants belonging to Prester John's Court came to him in a body, and said that, an he would, they were ready to bring him the Golden King alive. His answer was, that he desired nothing better, and would be much bounden to them if they would do so.

So when they had taken leave of their Lord and Master Prester John, they set off together, this goodly company of gallants, and went to the Golden King, and presented themselves before him, saying that they had come from foreign parts to enter his service. And he answered by telling them that they were right welcome, and that he was glad to have their service, never imagining that they had any ill intent. And so these mischievous squires took service with the Golden King, and served him so well that he grew to love them dearly.

And when they had abode with that King nearly two years, conducting themselves like persons who thought of anything but treason, they one day accompanied the King on a pleasure party when he had very few else along with him; for in those gallants the King had perfect trust, and thus kept them immediately about his person. So after they had crossed a certain river that is about a mile from the Castle, and saw that they were alone with the King, they said one to another that now was the time to achieve that they had come for. Then they all incontinently drew near, and told the King that he must go with them and make no resistance, or they would slay him. The King at this was in alarm and great astonishment, and said: "How then, good my sons, what thing is this ye say? and whither would ye have me go?" They answered and said: "You shall come with us, will ye nill ye, to Prester John our Lord."

And on this the Golden King was so sorely grieved that he was like to die. And he said to them: "Good my sons, for God's sake have pity and compassion upon me. Ye wot well what honourable and kindly entertainment ye have had in my house; and now ye would deliver me into the hands of mine enemy! In sooth, if ye do what ye say, ye will do a very naughty and disloyal deed, and a right villainous." But they answered only that so it must be, and away they had him to Prester John their Lord.

And when Prester John beheld the King he was right glad, and greeted him with something like a malison. The King answered not a word, as if he wist not what it behoved him to say. So Prester John ordered him to be taken forth straightway, and to be put to look after cattle, but to be well looked after himself also. So they took him and set him to keep cattle. This did Prester John of the grudge he bore the King, to heap contumely on him, and to show what a nothing he was, compared to himself.

And when the King had thus kept cattle for two years,

Prester John sent for him, and treated him with honour, and clothed him in rich robes, and said to him: "Now, Sir King, art thou satisfied that thou wast in no way a man to stand against me?" "Truly, my good Lord, I know well and always did know that I was in no way a man to stand against thee." And when he had said this Prester John replied: "I ask no more; but henceforth thou shalt be waited on and honourably treated." So he caused horses and harness of war to be given him, with a goodly train, and sent him back to his own country. And after that he remained ever friendly to Prester John, and held fast by him.

When Marco goes on to speak of the great river Caramoran, it is easy to identify that watercourse with one of the famous rivers of China. He says:

When you leave Chaicu, and travel about twenty miles westward, you come to a river called CARAMORAN, so big that no bridge can be thrown across it; for it is of immense width and depth, and reaches to the Great Ocean that encircles the Universe—I mean the whole earth. On this river there are many cities and walled towns, and many merchants too therein, for much traffic takes place upon the river, there being a great deal of ginger and a great deal of silk produced in the country.

This could be none other than the Hoang-Ho, or Yellow River, sometimes called "The Sorrow of China," on account of the great destruction of life and property it brings by its floods. We must bear in mind that, when Marco wrote, nobody actually knew what water or land lay to the eastward of

China; therefore he speaks of the "Great Ocean that encircles the Universe," and this was usually known as the "Ocean Sea." As the Amazon and the Mississippi rivers were unknown then, the Yellow River of China was the largest known, and Marco was the first to bring back to Europe any detailed account of that stream.

After crossing the Yellow River and travelling two days westward Marco reached the city of Chacanfu, and then eight days westward brought him to Kenjanfu, of which he makes mention after this manner:

And when you have travelled those eight days' journey, you come to that great city which I mentioned, called KENJANFU, which in old times was a noble, rich, and powerful realm, and had many great and wealthy and puissant kings. But now the king thereof is a prince called MANGALAI, the son of the Great Kaan, who hath given him this realm, and crowned him king thereof. It is a city of great trade and industry. They have great abundance of silk, from which they weave cloths of silk and gold, of divers kinds, and they also manufacture all sorts of equipments for an army. They have every necessary of man's life very cheap. The city lies towards the west; and outside the city is the palace of the Prince Mangalai, crowned king, and son of the Great Kaan, as I told you before.

This is a fine palace and a great, as I will tell you. It stands in a great plain abounding in lakes and streams and springs of water. Round about it is a massive and lofty wall, five miles in compass, well built, and all garnished

with battlements. And within this wall is the King's palace, so great and fine that no one could imagine a finer. There are in it many great and splendid halls, and many chambers, all painted and embellished with work in beaten gold. This Mangalai rules his realm right and well with justice and equity, and is much beloved by his people. The troops are quartered round about the palace, and enjoy the sport that the royal demesne affords.

Kenjanfu we know to be Singanfu, one of the ancient and historic cities of China. It was once the residence of the Chinese Emperor, and is now the capital of the province of Shansi. It is renowned as the seat of a Christian colony, of which a remarkable memorial remains. The Christian missionaries, who penetrated this remote region long before the coming of Marco Polo, were Nestorians from Persia, or from Constantinople—it is not certain which. They were Asiatics, and took their name from Nestorius, one of the early Christian bishops, who flourished in the fifth century of the Christian era, and whose seat was in Constantinople. A tablet has been found in a ruined temple near Singanfu, on which are inscribed in Chinese and Syriac characters a full statement of the sum of the Christian doctrine, an account of the arrival of a Christian missionary with books, the Emperor's approval of the doctrines, and his order for the erection of a church. This tablet, which is seven feet high and three feet wide,

and is surmounted by a carved likeness of a cross, is the oldest Christian monument in Asia.

Reaching the southern part of Shansi, Marco approaches Manzi, or that part of the empire which lies south of the Yellow River. The capital of the province, he says, is called "Acbalec Manzi, which signifies 'The White City of the Manzi Frontier.'" In these later days the Americans have had a White City, which was built for the Columbian Fair in Chicago.

Passing through Tibet, Marco notices particularly the bamboos there. He calls them "canes," and exaggerates a little about them; but perhaps exaggeration was natural, because, before gunpowder became familiar, no sharp explosive sounds of this kind were known to ordinary experience. This is what he says:

In this region you find quantities of canes, full three palms in girth and fifteen paces in length, with some three palms' interval between the joints. And let me tell you that merchants and other travellers are wont at nightfall to gather these canes and make fires of them; for as they burn they make such loud reports that the lions and bears and other wild beasts are greatly frightened, and make off as fast as possible; in fact, nothing will induce them to come nigh a fire of that sort. So you see the travellers make those fires to protect themselves and their cattle from the wild beasts, which have so greatly multiplied since the devastation of the country. And 'tis this great multiplication of the wild beasts that prevents the country from being

reoccupied. In fact, but for the help of these canes, which make such a noise in burning that the beasts are terrified and kept at a distance, no one would be able even to travel through the land.

I will tell you how it is that the canes make such a noise. The people cut the green canes, of which there are vast numbers, and set fire to a heap of them at once. After they have been awhile burning they burst asunder, and this makes such a loud report that you might hear it ten miles off. In fact, any one unused to this noise, who should hear it unexpectedly, might easily go into a swound or die of fright. But those who are used to it care nothing about it. Hence those who are not used to it stuff their ears well with cotton, and wrap up their heads and faces with all the clothes they can muster; and so they get along until they have become used to the sound. 'Tis just the same with horses. Those which are unused to these noises are so alarmed by them that they break away from their halters and heel-ropes, and many a man has lost his beasts in this way. So those who would avoid losing their horses take care to tie all four legs and peg the ropes down strongly, and to wrap the heads and eyes and ears of the animals closely, and so they save them. But horses also, when they have heard the noise several times, cease to mind it. I tell you the truth, however, when I say that the first time you hear it nothing can be more alarming. And yet, in spite of all, the lions and bears and other wild beasts will sometimes come and do much mischief; for their numbers are great in those tracts.

Marco's next advance was into the province of Yunnan, in the extreme south-western corner of China, north of Siam, and east of Burmah. Even in these modern times very little is known of

Yunnan, the best account of the country having been written by Mr. T. T. Cooper, an English traveller, who was killed by one of his own native guard, in Burmah, in 1878. It is not likely that Kublai Khan knew much about that most remote of his conquered provinces, and so young Marco was sent to bring to the Khan whatever information he could pick up concerning the country and its resources. Here is part of his report:

MARCO POLO'S REPORT UPON THE PROVINCE OF YUNNAN.

In this country gold-dust is found in great quantities; that is to say, in the rivers and lakes, while in the mountains gold is also found in pieces of larger size. Gold is indeed so abundant that they give one *saggio* of gold for only six of the same weight in silver. And for small change they use the porcelain shells, as I mentioned before. These are not found in the country, however, but are brought from India.

In this province are found snakes and great serpents of such vast size as to strike fear into those who see them, and so hideous that the very account of them must excite the wonder of those who hear it. I will tell you how long and big they are.

You may be assured that some of them are ten paces in length; some are more and some less. And in bulk they are equal to a great cask, for the bigger ones are about ten palms in girth. The head is very big. The mouth is large enough to swallow a man whole, and is garnished with great pointed teeth. And in short they are so fierce-looking and so hideously ugly, that every man and beast

must stand in fear and trembling of them. There are also smaller ones, such as of eight paces long, and of five, and of one pace only.

The way in which they are caught is this: You must know that by day they live underground because of the great heat, and in the night they go out to feed, and devour every animal they can catch. They go also to drink at the rivers and lakes and springs. And their weight is so great that when they travel in search of food or drink, as they do by night, the tail makes a great furrow in the soil, as if a full tun of liquor had been dragged along. Now the huntsmen who go after them take them by a certain gin [trap] which they set in the track over which the serpent has passed, knowing that the beast will come back the same way. They plant a stake deep in the ground, and fix on the head of this a sharp blade of steel made like a razor or a lance-point, and then they cover the whole with sand, so that the serpent cannot see it. Indeed, the huntsman plants several such stakes and blades on the track. On coming to the spot, the beast strikes against the iron blade with such force that it enters his breast and rives [cuts] him, so that he dies on the spot; and the crows on seeing the brute dead begin to caw, and then the huntsmen know that the serpent is dead and come in search of him.

This then is the way these beasts are taken. Those who take them proceed to extract the gall from the inside, and this sells at a great price; for you must know it furnishes the material for a most precious medicine. Thus if a person is bitten by a mad dog, and they give him but a small pennyweight of this medicine to drink, he is cured in a moment. Again, if one has any disease of the skin and applies a small quantity of this gall, he shall speedily be cured. So you see why it sells at such a high price.

They also sell the flesh of this serpent, for it is excellent eating, and the people are very fond of it. And when these serpents are very hungry, sometimes they will seek out the lairs of lions or bears or other large wild beasts, and devour their cubs, without the sire and dam being able to prevent it. Indeed, if they catch the big ones themselves they devour them too; they can make no resistance.

This was Marco's first view, we must suppose, of alligators or crocodiles. No wonder he gazed upon these horrid "serpents" with so much amazement. But if we leave out his ignorance of the name, we shall find that his account of the alligator, as he is now known, is accurate enough. The creatures are caught and killed now precisely as he narrates; and their habits are the same as he describes them. But we can well imagine that the incredulous Venetians, to whom these travellers' tales were told, winked to each other and smiled "in their sleeves" to hear such marvellous accounts of strange beasts.

Concerning the use of shells as money, it is hardly necessary to tell the bright young folks who read these chapters, that shells of the variety known as cowrie are still used in some parts of India and in the islands of the South Pacific for money. Marco found many people in Tibet and other Indo-Chinese provinces who used cakes of salt for small change. Salt is costly; everybody must have it; and, in

default of small money, it was and is used in making change.

The curious customs of the people of Zardandan attracted the attention of our traveller, who devotes a large section of one of his chapters to a description of them:

CONCERNING THE PROVINCE OF ZARDANDAN.

When you have left Carajan and have travelled five days westward, you find a province called ZARDANDAN. The capital city is called VOCHAN.

The people of this country all have their teeth gilt; or rather every man covers his teeth with a sort of golden case made to fit them, both the upper teeth and the under. The men do this, but not the women. The men also are wont to gird their arms and legs with bands or fillets pricked in black, and it is done thus: they take five needles joined together, and with these they prick the flesh till the blood comes, and then they rub in a certain black colouring stuff, and this is perfectly indelible. It is considered a piece of elegance and the sign of gentility to have this black band. The men are all gentlemen in their fashion, and do nothing but go to the wars, or go hunting and hawking. The ladies do all the business, aided by the slaves who have been taken in war.

They eat all kinds of meat, both raw and cooked, and they eat rice with their cooked meat as their fashion is. Their drink is wine made of rice and spices, and excellent it is. Their money is gold, and for small change they use pig-shells. And I can tell you they give one weight of gold for only five of silver; for there is no silver mine within five months' journey. And this induces merchants to go thither carrying a large supply of silver to change

among that people. And as they have only five weights of silver to give for one of fine gold, they make immense profits by their exchange business in that country.

These people have neither idols nor churches, but worship the progenitor of their family; "for 'tis he," say they, "from whom we have all sprung." They have no letters or writing; and 'tis no wonder, for the country is wild and hard of access, full of great woods and mountains which 'tis impossible to pass, the air in summer is so impure and bad; and any foreigners attempting it would die for certain. When these people have any business transactions with one another, they take a piece of stick, round or square, and split it, each taking half. And on either half they cut two or three notches. And when the account is settled the debtor receives back the other half of the stick from the creditor.

And let me tell you that in all those three provinces that I have been speaking of, to wit, Carajan, Vochan, and Yachi, there is never a leech. But when any one is ill they send for their magicians; that is to say, the Devil-conjurers and those who are the keepers of the idols. When these are come the sick man tells them what ails him, and then the conjurers incontinently begin playing on their instruments and singing and dancing; and the conjurers dance to such a pitch that at last one of them shall fall to the ground lifeless, like a dead man. And then the devil entereth into his body. And when his comrades see him in this plight they begin to put questions to him about the sick man's ailment. And he will reply: "Such or such a spirit hath been meddling with the man, for that he hath angered the spirit and done it some despite." Then they say: "We pray thee to pardon him, and to take of his blood or of his goods what thou wilt in consideration of thus restoring him to health." And when they have so prayed the malignant spirit that is in

the body of the prostrate man will (mayhap) answer: "The sick man hath also done great despite unto such another spirit, and that one is so ill-disposed that it will not pardon him on any account";—this at least is the answer they get, an the patient be like to die. But if he is to get better the answer will be that they are to bring two sheep, or maybe three; and to brew ten or twelve jars of drink, very costly and abundantly spiced. Moreover, it shall be announced that the sheep must be all black-faced, or of some other particular colour as it may hap; and then all those things are to be offered in sacrifice to such and such a spirit whose name is given. And they are to bring so many conjurers and so many ladies, and the business is to be done with a great singing of lauds, and with many lights, and store of good perfumes. That is the sort of answer they get if the patient is to get well. And then the kinsfolk of the sick man go and procure all that has been commanded, and do as has been bidden, and the conjurer who had uttered all that gets on his legs again.

So they fetch the sheep of the colour prescribed, and slaughter them, and sprinkled the blood over such places as have been enjoined, in honour and propitiation of the spirit. And the conjurers come, and the ladies, in the number that was ordered; and when all are assembled and everything is ready, they begin to dance and play and sing in honour of the spirit. And they take flesh-broth, and drink, and lign-aloes, and a great number of lights, and go about hither and thither, scattering the broth and the drink and the meat also. And when they have done this for a while, again shall one of the conjurers fall flat and wallow there foaming at the mouth, and then the others will ask if he have yet pardoned the sick man. And sometimes he shall answer Yea! and sometimes he shall answer No! And if the answer be *No*, they shall be told that something or other has to be done all over again, and then he will be

pardoned; so this they do. And when all that the spirit has commanded has been done with great ceremony, then it shall be announced that the man is pardoned and shall be speedily cured. So when they at length receive such a reply, they announce that it is all made up with the spirit, and that he is propitiated, and they fall to eating and drinking with great joy and mirth, and he who had been lying lifeless on the ground gets up and takes his share. So when they have all eaten and drunken, every man departs home. And presently the sick man gets sound and well.

OF THE BATTLE THAT WAS FOUGHT BY THE GREAT KAAN'S HOST AGAINST THE KING OF MIEN AND BANGALA.

But I was forgetting to tell you of a famous battle that was fought in the kingdom of Vochan in the province of Zardandan, and that ought not to be omitted from our Book.

You see, in the year of Christ 1272, the Great Kaan sent a large force into the kingdoms of Carajan and Vochan. Now there was a certain King called the King of Mien and Bangala, who was a very puissant Prince, with much territory and treasure and people. And it came to pass that when this King heard that the host of the Great Kaan was at Vochan, he said to himself that it behoved him to go against them with so great a force as should insure his cutting off the whole of them, insomuch that the Great Kaan would be very sorry ever to send an army again thither.

So this King prepared a great force and munitions of war; and he had, let me tell you, two thousand great elephants, on each of which was set a tower of timber, well framed and strong, and carrying from twelve to sixteen well-armed fighting-men. And besides these, he had of horsemen and of footmen good sixty thousand men. In short, he equipped a fine force, as well befitted such a

puissant Prince. It was indeed a host capable of doing great things.

And what shall I tell you? When the King had completed these great preparations to fight the Tartars, he tarried not, but straightway marched against them.

And when the Captain of the Tartar host had certain news that the King aforesaid was coming against him with so great a force, he waxed uneasy, seeing that he had with him but twelve thousand horsemen. Natheless he was a most valiant and able soldier, of great experience in arms, and an excellent Captain; and his name was Nescradin. His troops too were very good, and he gave them very particular orders and cautions how to act, and took every measure for his own defence and that of his army. And why should I make a long story of it? The whole force of the Tartars advanced to receive the enemy in the Plain of Vochan, and there they waited to give them battle. And this they did through the good judgment of the excellent Captain who led them; for hard by that plain was a great wood, thick with trees.

And when the army of the King of Mien had arrived in the plain, and was within a mile of the enemy, he caused all the castles that were on the elephants to be ordered for battle, and the fighting-men to take up their posts on them, and he arrayed his horse and his foot with all skill, like a wise King as he was. And when he had completed all his arrangements, he began to advance to engage the enemy. The Tartars, seeing the foe advance, showed no dismay, but came on likewise with good order and discipline to meet them. And when they were near, and naught remained but to begin the fight, the horses of the Tartars took such fright at the sight of the elephants that they could not be got to face the foe, but always swerved and turned back; whilst all the time the King and his forces, and all his elephants, continued to advance upon them.

And when the Tartars perceived how the case stood, they were in great wrath, and wist not what to say or do; for well enough they saw that unless they could get their horses to advance all would be lost. But their Captain acted like a wise leader who had considered everything beforehand. He immediately gave orders that every man should dismount and tie his horse to the trees of the forest that stood hard by, and that then they should take to their bows, a weapon that they knew how to handle better than any troops in the world. They did as he bade them, and plied their bows stoutly, shooting so many shafts at the advancing elephants that in a short space they had wounded or slain the greater part of them, as well as of the men they carried. The enemy also shot at the Tartars, but the Tartars had the better weapons, and were the better archers to boot.

And what shall I tell you? Understand that when the elephants felt the smart of those arrows that pelted them like rain, they turned tail and fled, and nothing on earth would have induced them to turn and face the Tartars. So off they sped with such a noise and uproar that you would have trowed the world was coming to an end! And then, too, they plunged into the wood and rushed this way and that, dashing their castles against the trees, bursting their harness, and smashing and destroying everything that was on them.

So when the Tartars saw that the elephants had turned tail and could not be brought to face the fight again, they got to horse at once and charged the enemy. And then the battle began to rage furiously with sword and mace. Right fiercely did the two hosts rush together, and deadly were the blows exchanged. The King's troops were far more in number than the Tartars, but they were not of such metal, nor so inured to war; otherwise the Tartars, who were so few in number, could never have stood against

them. Then might you see swashing blows dealt and taken from sword and mace; then might you see knights and horses and men-at-arms go down; then might you see arms and hands and legs and heads hewn off; and besides the dead that fell, many a wounded man, that never rose again, for the sore press there was. The din and uproar were so great from this side and from that, that God might have thundered and no man would have heard it! Great was the medley, and dire and perilous was the fight that was fought on both sides; but the Tartars had the best of it.

In an ill hour indeed for the King and his people was that battle begun, so many of them were slain therein. And when they had continued fighting till midday, the King's troops could stand against the Tartars no longer, but felt that they were defeated, and turned and fled. And when the Tartars saw them routed they gave chase, and hacked and slew so mercilessly that it was a piteous sight to see. But after pursuing awhile they gave up, and returned to the wood to catch the elephants that had run away; and to manage this they had to cut down great trees to bar their passage. Even then they would not have been able to take them without the help of the King's own men who had been taken, and who knew better how to deal with the beasts than the Tartars did. The elephant is an animal that has more wit than any other; but in this way at last they were caught, more than two hundred of them. And it was from this time forth that the Great Kaan began to keep numbers of elephants.

OF THE GREAT DESCENT THAT LEADS TOWARDS THE KINGDOM OF MIEN.

After leaving the province of which I have been speaking, you come to a great Descent. In fact, you ride for two

days and a half continually downhill. On all this descent there is nothing worthy of mention, except only that there is a large place there where occasionally a great market is held; for all the people of the country round come thither on fixed days, three times a week, and hold a market there, They exchange gold for silver; for they have gold in abundance; and they give one weight of fine gold for five weights of fine silver; so this induces merchants to come from various quarters, bringing silver which they exchange for gold with these people; and in this way the merchants make great gain. As regards those people of the country who dispose of gold so cheaply, you must understand that nobody is acquainted with their places of abode, for they dwell in inaccessible positions, in sites so wild and strong that no one can get at them to meddle with them. Nor will they allow anybody to accompany them, so as to gain a knowledge of their abodes.

CONCERNING THE CITY OF MIEN AND THE TWO TOWERS THAT ARE THEREIN.

In this city there is a thing so rich and rare that I must tell you about it. You see there was in former days a rich and puissant King in this city, and when he was about to die he commanded that by his tomb they should erect two towers (one at either end), one of gold and the other of silver, in such fashion as I shall tell you. The towers are built of fine stone; and then one of them has been covered with gold a good finger in thickness, so that the tower looks as if it were all of solid gold; and the other is covered with silver in like manner, so that it seems to be all of solid silver. Each tower is a good ten paces in height and of breadth in proportion. The upper part of these towers is round, and girt all about with bells, the top of the gold tower with gilded bells and the silver tower with

silvered bells, insomuch that whenever the wind blows among these bells they tinkle. The tomb likewise was plated partly with gold, and partly with silver. The King caused these towers to be erected to commemorate his magnificence and for the good of his soul; and really they do form one of the finest sights in the world, so exquisitely finished are they, so splendid and costly. And when they are lighted up by the sun they shine most brilliantly, and are visible from a vast distance.

The name Zardandan signifies "Gold Teeth," and is derived from the Persian. The custom of covering the teeth with plates of gold was not confined to the great ones of Zardandan; early travellers in Sumatra tell us, that the wealthy nobles of that country were accustomed to decorate their teeth in the same manner. Rashiduddin, who was a contemporary with Marco Polo, speaks of the Zardandans as inhabiting the province on the frontier of Tibet; and of them he says: "These people cover their teeth with a gold case, which they take off when they eat." Vochan, the chief city of the province of Zardandan, is undoubtedly the Chinese city of Yungchangfu, a place of considerable importance, on the great high road which leads to Ava and Tibet. As for the curious marking of the bodies of men and women by pricking into the flesh certain pigments, we know that tattooing is still practised in many parts of the world. Indeed, the practice is by no means confined to semi-barbarous peoples. Many a sailor-man in the

British and American navies has been adorned on various parts of his body with patriotic emblems and fanciful pictures, pricked into his flesh in divers colours.

Yunnan is still noted for its ample yield of gold, so that it is a common saying in China, when a man lives extravagantly, that his father "must needs be governor of Yunnan." But the relative value of gold and silver is no longer so variable as it was in the time of Polo. He says that, in the eastern part of Yunnan, one weight of gold was equal to eight of silver; in the western part, it was six to one, and on the borders of Ava, it was only five of silver to one of gold. In those days, we must suppose, communication was infrequent between the different provinces, so these great variations in the relative values of the metals were not unnatural.

"Score and tally" was the primitive method of keeping accounts among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors; and it is a matter of record that the great fire, which destroyed the Houses of Parliament in 1834, was caused by overheating the flues of the furnaces, when a vast number of discarded wooden tallies, which had accumulated in the cellars of the building, were being burnt. The tally was a square strip of wood, on each angle of which were cut notches to represent numbers, or compounds of numbers; and the score was a series of marks set down, usually

by fives, on any smooth surface accessible to the person who kept the account. In a case in court, once upon a time in England, when a taverner's customer demurred against the account of measures of ale charged to him, the inn-keeper's door was removed from its hinges and produced in court by way of documentary evidence.

Devil-doctors, or exorcists, are still common among the half-civilised tribes of all lands. The North American Indians send for their "medicine-man" when one of their number falls ill. This functionary, assisted by persons whom he calls to his aid, leads off in a wild chant, and the entire band make a prodigious clatter with various implements to "drive away the evil spirit" who is tormenting the sick man. If the man dies (and the intolerable din, kept up in his wigwam, not infrequently hurries him on his long journey), the medicine-man calmly explains that the evil spirit was one of the hard and difficult kind that go not out at the word of any man. All over the region in which the Aryan race originated, the custom of devil-dancing, or exorcism, still prevails; moreover, this strange superstitution, or something very like it, may be traced in some of the darker parts of the world, among non-Aryan peoples.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN SOUTHERN CHINA AND LAOS—CURIOUS CUSTOMS OF A STRANGE PEOPLE—LIONS AND LION-HUNTING DOGS—MARVELLOUS PRODUCTS OF SILK—THE REBELLION AND PUNISHMENT OF LIYTAN.

THE next succeeding chapters of Marco Polo's book deal chiefly with regions, which the famous traveller did not visit, but of which he gave such accounts as he could procure from the people among whom he travelled, after he left Yunnan and passed as far as he chose in the direction of Siam and Burmah. The region which he next proceeds to describe, you must understand, lies north of Siam and east of Burmah.

DISCOURSES OF THE PROVINCE OF CAUGIGU.

CAUGIGU is a province toward the east, which has a king. The people are Idolaters, and have made their submission to the Great Kaan, and send him tribute every year. And let me tell you their king is so given to luxury that he hath at the least three hundred wives; for whenever he hears of any beautiful woman in the land, he takes and marries her.

They find in this country a good deal of gold, and they also have great abundance of spices. But they are such

a long way from the sea that the products are of little value, and thus their price is low. They have elephants in great numbers, and other cattle of sundry kinds, and plenty of game. They live on flesh and milk and rice, and have wine made of rice and good spices. The whole of the people, or nearly so, have their skin marked with the needle in patterns representing lions, dragons, birds, and what not, done in such a way that it can never be obliterated. This work they cause to be wrought over face and neck and chest, arms and hands, and, in short, the whole body; and they look on it as a token of elegance, so that those who have the largest amount of this embroidery are regarded with the greatest admiration.

CONCERNING THE PROVINCE OF ANIN.

ANIN is a province toward the east, the people of which are subject to the Great Kaan, and are Idolaters. They live by cattle and tillage, and have a peculiar language. The women wear on the legs and arms bracelets of gold and silver of great value, and the men wear such as are even yet more costly. They have plenty of horses, which they sell in great numbers to the Indians, making a great profit thereby. And they have also vast herds of buffaloes and oxen, having excellent pastures for these. They have likewise all the necessaries of life in abundance.

Now you must know that between Anin and Caugigu, which we have left behind us, there is a distance of twenty-five days' journey; and from Caugigu to Bangala, the third province in our rear, is thirty days' journey.

CONCERNING THE PROVINCE OF COLOMAN.

COLOMAN is a province eight days' journey toward the east, the people of which are Idolaters and have a peculiar language. They are a tall and very handsome people,

though in complexion brown rather than white, and are good soldiers. They have a good many towns, and a vast number of villages, among great mountains, and in strong positions.

When any of them die the bodies are burnt, and then they take the bones and put them in little chests. These are carried high up the mountains, and placed in great caverns, where they are hung up in such wise that neither man nor beast can come at them.

A good deal of gold is found in the country, and for petty traffic they use porcelain shells such as I have told you of before. All these provinces that I have been speaking of, to wit Bangala and Caugigu and Anin, employ for currency porcelain shells and gold. There are merchants in this country who are very rich and dispose of large quantities of goods. The people live on flesh and rice and milk, and brew their wine from rice and excellent spices.

CONCERNING THE PROVINCE OF CUIJU.

CUIJU is a province toward the east. After leaving Coloman you travel along a river for twelve days, meeting with a good number of towns and villages, but nothing worthy of particular mention. After you have travelled those twelve days along the river, you come to a great and noble city which is called FUNGUL.

The people live by trade and handicrafts, and they manufacture stuffs of the bark of certain trees which form very fine summer clothing. They are good soldiers, and have paper money. For you must understand that henceforward we are in the countries where the Great Kaan's paper money is current.

The country swarms with lions to that degree that no man can venture to sleep outside his house at night. Moreover, when you travel on that river, and come to

a halt at night, unless you keep a good way from the bank the lions will spring on the boat and snatch one of the crew and make off with him and devour him. And but for a certain help that the inhabitants enjoy, no one could venture to travel in that province, because of the multitude of those lions, and because of their strength and ferocity.

But you see they have in this province a large breed of dogs, so fierce and bold that two of them together will attack a lion. So every man who goes a journey takes with him a couple of those dogs; and when a lion appears they have at him with the greatest boldness, and the lion turns on them, but can't touch them, for they are very deft at eschewing his blows. So they follow him, perpetually giving tongue, and watching their chance to give him a bite in the rump or in the thigh, or wherever they may. The lion makes no reprisal except now and then to turn fiercely on them, and then indeed were he to catch the dogs it would be all over with them, but they take good care that he shall not. So, to escape the dogs' din, the lion makes off, and gets into the wood, where mayhap he stands at bay against a tree. And when the travellers see the lion in this plight they take to their bows, for they are capital archers, and shoot their arrows at him till he falls dead. And 'tis thus that travellers in those parts do deliver themselves from those lions.

They have a good deal of silk and other products, which are carried up and down, by the river of which we spoke, into various quarters.

You travel along the river for twelve days more, finding a good many towns all along, and the people always Idolaters, and subject to the Great Kaan, with paper money current, and living by trade and handicrafts. There are also plenty of fighting-men. And after travelling those twelve days you arrive at the city of Sindafu, of which we spoke in this Book some time ago.

From Sindafu you set out again, and travel some seventy days through the provinces and cities and towns which we have already visited, and all which have been already particularly spoken of in our Book. At the end of those seventy days you come to Juju, where we were before.

From Juju you set out again and travel four days toward the south, finding many towns and villages. The people are great traders and craftsmen, are all Idolaters, and use the paper money of the Great Kaan their Sovereign. At the end of those four days you come to the city of Cacanfu, belonging to the province of Cathay.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the title, which Polo gives to the country described under the name of Caugigu; and it is not easy to imagine how the native name of the region has been so often and so widely misunderstood. It is enough for us to know, that the country here specified is, by the best authorities, supposed to be the kingdom of Laos, a country lying north and east of Siam and tributary to that power. The people of Laos tattoo themselves in the manner described by Marco Polo, and their country is shut in from the sea and abounds in elephants, as our traveller says. The province of Anin is believed to be the extreme south-eastern part of Yunnan, the inhabitants of which have plenty of buffaloes and other domestic animals; and they adorn themselves with a profusion of gold and silver ornaments, as recorded by the great Venetian. The other provinces of which Marco

speaks, Coloman and Cuiju, lie to the north-east of those already mentioned. Cuiju is probably the ancient name (much distorted) of the Chinese province of Kweichau, north-east of Yunnan. "The great and noble city of Fungul" is set down on modern maps as Phungan, a city of some wealth and prominence in Marco Polo's time, but now of small note. In that city, however, they still make a fabric known as grass-cloth, which is manufactured from vegetable fibres. There are no lions in the Chinese Empire, the beasts which Polo calls by that name being undoubtedly tigers, which are very fierce and common. The great dogs of Kweichau have been mentioned by modern travellers, and the story of their pursuing and putting to flight the savage animals that harass the people is by no means to be regarded as a fable. And now we pass over into Pecheli.

CONCERNING THE CITIES OF CACANFU AND OF CHANGLU.

CACANFU is a noble city. The people have plenty of silk, from which they weave stuffs of silk and gold, and sandals in large quantities. There are also certain Christians at this place, who have a church. And the city is at the head of an important territory containing numerous towns and villages. A great river passes through it, on which much merchandise is carried to the city of Cambaluc, for by many channels and canals it is connected therewith.

We will now set forth again, and travel three days towards the south, and then we come to a town called

CHANGLU. This is another great city belonging to the Great Kaan, and to the province of Cathay. The people have paper money and burn their dead. They make salt in great quantities at this place. I will tell you how 'tis done.

A kind of earth is found there which is exceedingly salt. This they dig up and pile in great heaps. Upon these heaps they pour water in quantities till it runs out at the bottom; and then they take up this water and boil it well in great iron cauldrons, and as it cools it deposits a fine white salt in very small grains. This salt they then carry about for sale to many neighbouring districts, and get great profit thereby.

There is nothing else worth mentioning, so let us go forward five days' journey, and we shall come to a city called Chinangli.

CONCERNING THE CITY OF CHINANGLI AND THAT OF TADINFU, AND THE REBELLION OF LIYTAN.

CHINANGLI is a city of Cathay as you go south. There runs through the city a great and wide river, on which a large traffic in silk goods and spices and other costly merchandise passes up and down.

When you travel south from Chinangli for five days, you meet everywhere with fine towns and villages, the people of which live by trade and handicrafts, and have all the necessaries of life in great abundance; but there is nothing particular to mention on the way till you come, at the end of those five days, to TADINFU.

This, you must know, is a very great city, and in old times was the seat of a great kingdom; but the Great Kaan conquered it by force of arms. Nevertheless it is still the noblest city in all those provinces. There are very great merchants here who trade on a great scale, and

the abundance of silk is something marvellous. They have, moreover, most charming gardens abounding with fruit of large size. The city of Tadinfu hath also under its rule eleven imperial cities of great importance, all of which enjoy a large and profitable trade, owing to that immense produce of silk.

Now, you must know, that in the year 1273, the Great Kaan had sent a certain Baron called LIYTAN SANGON, with some eighty thousand horse, to this province and city to garrison them. And after the said captain had tarried there awhile, he formed a disloyal and traitorous plot, and stirred up the great men of the province to rebel against the Great Kaan. And so they did; for they broke into revolt against their Sovereign Lord, and refused all obedience to him, and made this Liytan, whom their Sovereign had sent thither for their protection, to be the chief of their revolt.

When the Great Kaan heard thereof he straightway despatched two of his Barons, one of whom was called AGUIL and the other MONGOTAY, giving them one hundred thousand horse and a great force of infantry. But the affair was a serious one, for the Barons were met by the rebel Liytan with all those whom he had collected from the province, mustering more than one hundred thousand horse and a large force of foot. Nevertheless in the battle Liytan and his party were utterly routed, and the two Barons whom the Emperor had sent won the victory. When the news came to the Great Kaan he was right well pleased, and ordered that all the chiefs who had rebelled, or excited others to rebel, should be put to a cruel death, but that those of lower rank should receive a pardon. And so it was done. The two Barons had all the leaders of the enterprise put to a cruel death, and all of those of lower rank were pardoned. And thenceforward they conducted themselves with loyalty towards their Lord.

CONCERNING THE NOBLE CITY OF SINJUMATU.

On leaving Tadinfu you travel three days towards the south, always finding numbers of noble and populous towns and villages flourishing with trade and manufactures. There is also abundance of game in the country, and everything in profusion.

When you have travelled those three days you come to the noble city of SINJUMATU, a rich and fine place, with great trade and manufactures. The people are subjects of the Great Kaan, and have paper money, and they have a river which I can assure you brings them great gain, and I will tell you about it.

You see the river in question flows from the south to this city of Sinjumatu. And the people of the city have divided this larger river in two, making one half of it flow east and the other half flow west; that is to say, the one branch flows towards Manzi and the other towards Cathay. And it is a fact that the number of vessels at this city is what no one would believe without seeing them. The quantity of merchandise also which these vessels transport to Manzi and Cathay is something marvellous; and then they return loaded with other merchandise, so that the amount of goods borne to and fro on those two rivers is quite astonishing.

CONCERNING THE CITIES OF LINJU AND PIJU.

On leaving the city of Sinjumatu you travel for eight days toward the south, always coming to great and rich towns and villages flourishing with trade and manufactures. At the end of those eight days you come to the city of LINJU, in the province of the same name, of which it is the capital. It is a rich and noble city, and the men are good soldiers. Natheless they carry on great trade and manufactures. There is great abundance of game in both beasts and birds,

and all the necessaries of life are in profusion. The place stands on the river of which I told you above. And they have here great numbers of vessels, even greater than those of which I spoke before, and these transport a great amount of costly merchandise.

So, quitting this province and city of Linju, you travel three days more towards the south, constantly finding numbers of rich towns and villages. These still belong to Cathay and the Great Kaan, whose subjects they are. This is the finest country for game, whether in beasts or birds, that is anywhere to be found, and all the necessaries of life are in profusion.

At the end of those three days you find the city of PIJU, a great, rich, and noble city, with large trade and manufactures, and a great production of silk. This city stands at the entrance to the great province of Manzi, and there reside at it a great number of merchants who despatch carts from this place loaded with great quantities of goods to the different towns of Manzi. The city brings in a great revenue to the Great Kaan.

Cacanfu is now known as Hokianfu, in Pecheli. Chinangli is believed to be the modern Thsinanfu, now the chief city of the province of Shantung. The identity of Tadinfu is not so easily established. As this part of China is not often visited by European or American travellers, our knowledge of the country is derived from ancient accounts, such as Polo's book; and as he did not in all cases see with his own eyes the countries which he describes, it is greatly to his credit that the few reports, which we have from those long-closed regions, correspond so closely with

the Venetian's accounts. Thus Thsinanfu, otherwise Chinangli, is still a city of some importance, with several fine temples, and buildings, which prove that it was the capital of the province. Silk is now a notable product of the province of Shantung, as it was when Marco Polo wrote his report concerning the resources of the country. The silkworm of the mulberry tree is here a native, and the "immense produce of silk" of which our traveller speaks has been going on, according to Chinese annals, for many thousands of years.

The rebellion of Liytan is described in Chinese history, but the date, according to those records, was 1262, and not 1273. The word "Sangon" means "a general of division," indicating the military rank of Liytan, whose revolt was quelled, as Marco Polo relates. The river, which, he tells us, was divided here at the city of Sinjumatu, is supposed to be a section of the Great Canal of China, the famous waterway which connects the lakes and rivers of China so ingeniously that it may be said to afford communication between Canton and Peking, a distance of one thousand miles. This canal was formerly regarded as one of the wonders of the world; and even now, after it has been damaged by wars, inundations, and accidents, it is a work of great importance and interest.

CHAPTER XIX.

BAYAN HUNDRED-EYES — THE POLO BROTHERS INTRODUCE WESTERN SIEGE ARTILLERY—THE YANG-TSE-KIANG AND ITS MONASTERIES—KINSAY (THE CITY OF HEAVEN) DESCRIBED.

AFTER Marco had visited Yunnan, he made an excursion into Burmah and Bengal. Returning to Cathay, he describes some of the cities of the southern part of that empire, and tells us

HOW THE GREAT KAAN CONQUERED THE PROVINCE OF MANZI.

You must know that there was a king and sovereign lord of the great territory of Manzi who was styled Facfur, so great and puissant a prince that, for vastness of wealth and number of subjects and extent of dominion, there was hardly a greater in all the earth except the Great Kaan himself. But the people of this land were anything rather than warriors.

In all his dominion there were no horses; nor were the people ever inured to battle or arms, or military service of any kind. Yet the province of Manzi is very strong by nature, and all the cities are encompassed by sheets of water of great depth, and more than an arblast-shot in width; so that the country never would have been lost, had the people been but soldiers. But that is just what they were not; so lost it was.

Now it came to pass, in the year of Christ's incarnation, 1268, that the Great Kaan, the same that now reigneth, despatched thither a Baron of his whose name was Bayan Chincsan, which is as much as to say "Bayan Hundred-Eyes." And you must know that the King of Manzi had found in his horoscope that he never should lose his kingdom except through a man that had an hundred eyes; so he held himself assured in his position, for he could not believe that any man in existence could have an hundred eyes. There, however, he deluded himself, in his ignorance of the name of Bayan.

This Bayan had an immense force of horse and foot entrusted to him by the Great Kaan, and with these he entered Manzi, and he had also a great number of boats to carry both horse and foot when need should be. And when he, with all his host, entered the territory of Manzi, and arrived at the city of Coiganju, he summoned the people thereof to surrender to the Great Kaan; but this they flatly refused. On this Bayan went on to another city, with the same result, and then still went forward; acting thus because he was aware that the Great Kaan was despatching another great host to follow him up.

What shall I say then? He advanced to five cities in succession, but got possession of none of them; for he did not wish to engage in besieging them, and they would not give themselves up. But when he came to the sixth city he took that by storm, and so with a second, and a third, and a fourth, until he had taken twelve cities in succession. And when he had taken all these, he advanced straight against the capital city of the kingdom, which was called Kinsay, and which was the residence of the King and Queen.

And when the King beheld Bayan coming with all his host he was in great dismay, as one unused to see such sights. So he and a great company of his people got on

board a thousand ships and fled to the islands of the Ocean Sea, whilst the Queen, who remained behind in the city, took all measures in her power for its defence, like a valiant lady.

Now it came to pass that the Queen asked what was the name of the captain of the host, and they told her that it was Bayan Hundred-Eyes. So when she wist that he was styled Hundred-Eyes, she called to mind how their astrologers had foretold that a man of an hundred eyes should strip them of the kingdom. Wherefore she gave herself up to Bayan, and surrendered to him the whole kingdom and all the other cities and fortresses, so that no resistance was made. And in sooth this was a goodly conquest, for there was no realm on earth half so wealthy.

Marco then proceeds to relate a curious circumstance connected with the capture of the city of Saianfu, or Siangyangfu, as it is now called, one of the cities of Manzi, the province lying south of the Yellow River. He says:

Now you must know that this city held out against the Great Kaan for three years after the rest of Manzi had surrendered. The Great Kaan's troops made incessant attempts to take it, but they could not succeed because of the great and deep waters that were round about it, so that they could approach from one side only, which was the north. And I tell you they never would have taken it, but for a circumstance that I am going to relate.

You must know that when the Great Kaan's host had lain three years before the city without being able to take it, they were greatly chafed thereat. Then Messer Nicolo Polo and Messer Maffeo and Messer Marco said, "We could find you a way of forcing the city to surrender

CATAPULTS, MANGONELS, AND OTHER MACHINES

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speedily"; whereupon those of the army replied, that they would be right glad to know how that should be. All this talk took place in the presence of the Great Kaan. For messengers had been despatched from the camp to tell him that there was no taking the city by blockade, for it continually received supplies of victual from those sides which they were unable to invest; and the Great Kaan had sent back word that take it they must, and find a way how. Then spoke up the Two Brothers and Messer Marco the son, and said: "Great Prince, we have with us among our followers men who are able to construct mangonels which shall cast such great stones that the garrison will never be able to stand them, but will surrender at once, as soon as the mangonels or trebuchets shall have shot into the town."

The Kaan bade them with all his heart have such mangonels made as speedily as possible. Now Messer Nicolo and his brother and his son immediately caused timber to be brought, as much as they desired, and fit for the work in hand. And they had two men among their followers, a German and a Nestorian Christian, who were masters of that business, and these they directed to construct two or three mangonels capable of casting stones of three hundred pounds' weight. Accordingly they made three fine mangonels, each of which cast stones of three hundred pounds' weight and more. And when they were complete and ready for use, the Emperor and the others were greatly pleased to see them, and caused several stones to be shot in their presence; whereat they marvelled greatly and greatly praised the work. And the Kaan ordered that the engines should be carried to his army which was at the leaguer of Saianfu.

And when the engines were got to the camp they were forthwith set up, to the great admiration of the Tartars. And what shall I tell you? When the engines were set up

and put in gear, a stone was shot from each of them into the town. These took effect among the buildings, crashing and smashing through everything with huge din and commotion. And when the townspeople witnessed this new and strange visitation, they were so astonished and dismayed that they wist not what to do or say. They took counsel together, but no counsel could be suggested how to escape from these engines, for the thing seemed to them to be done by sorcery. They declared that they were all dead men if they yielded not, so they determined to surrender on such conditions as they could get.

So the men of the city surrendered, and were received to terms; and this all came about through the exertions of Messer Nicolo and Messer Maffeo and Messer Marco; and it was no small matter. For this city and province is one of the best that the Great Kaan possesses, and brings him in great revenues.

There is some uncertainty about the story, as here told by Marco, for history relates that the city was reduced at a period earlier than the time of the visit of the Polos; but, possibly, some mistake has been made in the dates recorded by the Chinese historians. In any case, however, the employment of novel engines of war, by the advice of strangers from the West, was an actual fact; all histories agree as to that. A mangonel was an engine of timber designed to throw great stones a long distance with terrific force, exactly as described by Marco. In those ancient times, before the invention of gunpowder, it was customary to use these, and also

arblasts, or bows of steel or horn, so tough and strong that the string had to be drawn back to the trigger by a lever or a winch. Other contrivances for throwing bolts and stones were the catapult and the ballista. It is related that burning stuff to corrupt the air was sometimes thrown into a city by the besiegers who used these machines. The machines used by the Saracens were called trebuchets—a name sometimes applied to the mangonel.

The Yang-tse-Kiang river aroused the admiration of Marco, and he devotes much space to an account of its vastness and the volume of its commerce. The Chinese name for the stream is "Son of the Ocean," so great is its depth and width. Of it the traveller says:

And I assure you this river flows so far and traverses so many countries and cities that in good sooth there pass and repass on its waters a great number of vessels, and more wealth and merchandise than on all the rivers and all the seas of Christendom put together! It seems indeed more like a Sea than a River. Messer Marco Polo said that he once beheld at that city fifteen thousand vessels at one time. And you may judge, if this city, of no great size, has such a number, how many must there be altogether, considering that on the banks of this river there are more than sixteen provinces and more than two hundred great cities, besides towns and villages, all possessing vessels?

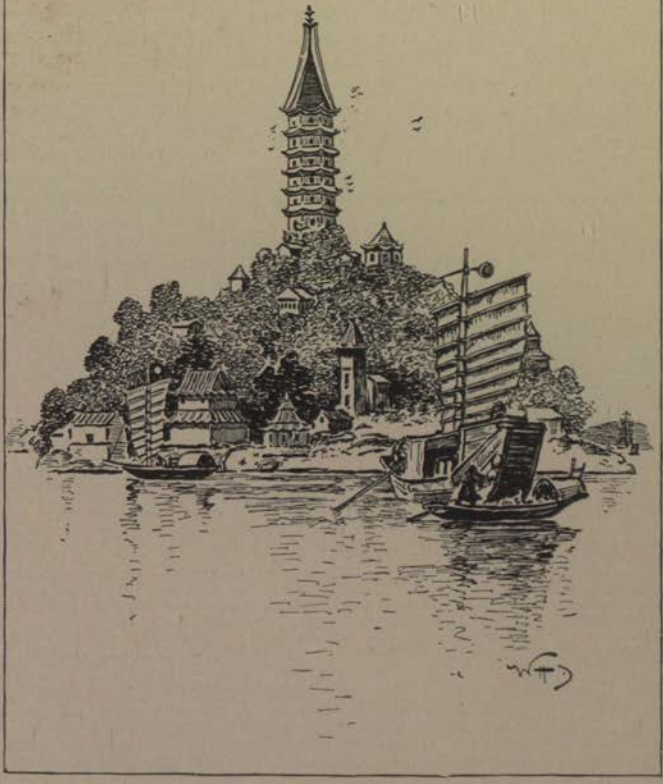
Messer Marco Polo aforesaid tells us that he heard from the officer employed to collect the Great Kaan's duties on this river that there passed upstream two hundred thousand

vessels in the year, without counting those that passed down! Indeed, as it has a course of such great length, and receives so many other navigable rivers, it is no wonder that the merchandise which is borne on it is of vast amount and value. And the article in largest quantity of all is salt, which is carried by this river and its branches to all the cities on their banks, and thence to the other cities in the interior.

The vessels which ply on this river are decked. They have but one mast, but they are of great burthen, for I can assure you they carry, reckoning by our weight, from four thousand to twelve thousand cantars each. In going upstream they have to be hauled, for the current is so strong that they could not make head in any other manner. Now the tow-line, which is some three hundred paces in length, is made of nothing but cane. 'Tis in this way: they have those great canes of which I told you before that they are some fifteen paces in length; these they take and split from end to end into many slender strips, and then they twist these strips together so as to make a rope of any length they please. And the ropes so made are stronger than if they were made of hemp.

There are at many places on this river hills and rocky eminences on which the idol-monasteries and other edifices are built, and you find on its shores a constant succession of villages and inhabited places.

There is very little exaggeration in this account. By twelve thousand cantars we should understand that the traveller refers to a weight equal to a little more than five hundred tons, which is a large cargo. The "idol-monasteries" of Marco Polo still stand on the rocky islets of the Yang-tse-Kiang; they are



AN ISLAND MONASTERY.

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Buddhist monasteries, and are known as Orphan Rock, Golden Island, and Silver Island. And they are very picturesque features of the river scenery.

At the beginning of this chapter Marco has told us about the conquest of the province of Manzi, with the surrender of Kinsay, its capital: he now describes Kinsay itself—the name means "The City of Heaven"—which, he says, was "beyond dispute the finest and the noblest in the world."

First and foremost, the city is so great that it hath an hundred miles of compass. And there are in it twelve thousand bridges of stone, for the most part so lofty that a great fleet could pass beneath them. And let no man marvel that there are so many bridges, for you see that the whole city stands as it were in the water and surrounded by water, so that a great many bridges are required to give free passage about it. And though the bridges be so high, the approaches are so well contrived that carts and horses do cross them.

There are in this city twelve guilds of the different crafts, and each guild has twelve thousand houses in the occupation of its workmen. Each of these houses contains at least twelve men, whilst some contain twenty and some forty—not that these are all masters, but inclusive of the journeymen who work under the masters. And yet all these craftsmen had full occupation, for many other cities of the kingdom are supplied from this city with what they require.

The number and wealth of the merchants, and the amount of goods that passed through their hands, was so enormous that no man could form a just estimate thereof. And I should have told you, with regard to those masters of

the different crafts who are at the head of such houses as I have mentioned, that neither they nor their wives ever touch a piece of work with their own hands, but live as nicely and delicately as if they were kings and queens. The wives indeed are most dainty and angelical creatures! Moreover, it was an ordinance laid down by the King that every man should follow his father's business and no other, no matter if he possessed one hundred thousand bezants.

Inside the city there is a lake which has a compass of some thirty miles: and all round it are erected beautiful palaces and mansions, of the richest and most exquisite structure that you can imagine, belonging to the nobles of the city. There are also on its shores many abbeys and churches of the Idolaters. In the middle of the lake are two islands, on each of which stands a rich, beautiful, and spacious edifice, furnished in such style as to seem fit for the palace of an emperor. And when any one of the citizens desired to hold a marriage feast, or to give any other entertainment, it used to be done at one of these palaces. And everything would be found there ready to order, such as silver plate, trenchers and dishes, napkins and tablecloths, and whatever else was needful. The King made this provision for the gratification of his people, and the place was open to every one who desired to give an entertainment. Sometimes there would be at these palaces an hundred different parties; some holding a banquet, others celebrating a wedding; and yet all would find good accommodation in the different apartments and pavilions, and that in so well-ordered a manner that one party was never in the way of another.

The houses of the city are provided with lofty towers of stone, in which articles of value are stored for fear of fire; for most of the houses themselves are of timber, and fires are very frequent in the city.

Since the Great Kaan occupied the city, he has ordained

GOLDEN ISLAND.

[*To face p.* 204.

that each of the twelve thousand bridges should be provided with a guard of ten men, in case of any disturbance, or of any being so rash as to plot treason or insurrection against him. Each guard is provided with a hollow instrument of wood and with a metal basin, and with a time-keeper to enable them to know the hour of the day or night. And so when one hour of the night is past, the sentry strikes one on the wooden instrument and one on the basin, so that the whole quarter of the city is made aware that one hour of the night is gone. At the second hour he gives two strokes, and so on, keeping always wide awake and on the lookout. In the morning again, from the sunrise, they begin to count anew, and strike one hour as they did in the night, and so on hour after hour.

Part of the watch patrols the quarter, to see if any light or fire is burning after the lawful hours; if they find any they mark the door, and in the morning the owner is summoned before the magistrates, and unless he can plead a good excuse he is punished. Also if they find any one going about the streets at unlawful hours they arrest him, and in the morning they bring him before the magistrates. If they see that any house has caught fire, they immediately beat upon that wooden instrument to give the alarm, and this brings together the watchmen from the other bridges to help to extinguish it, and to save the goods of the merchants or others, either by removing them to the towers above mentioned, or by putting them in boats and transporting them to the islands in the lake. For no citizen dares leave his house at night, or to come near the fire; only those who own the property, and those watchmen who flock to help, of whom there shall come one or two thousand at the least.

Moreover, within the city there is an eminence on which stands a tower, and at the top of the tower is hung a

slab of wood. Whenever fire or any other alarm breaks out in the city, a man who stands there with a mallet in his hand beats upon the slab, making a noise that is heard to a great distance. So when the blows upon this slab are heard, everybody is aware that fire has broken out, or that there is some other cause of alarm.

You must know also that the city of Kinsay has some three hundred baths, the water of which is supplied by springs. They are hot baths, and the people take great delight in them, frequenting them several times a month, for they are very cleanly in their persons. They are the finest and largest baths in the world, large enough for one hundred persons to bathe together.

The people of this country have a custom, that as soon as a child is born they write down the day and hour and the planet and sign under which its birth has taken place, so that every one among them knows the day of his birth. And when any one intends a journey he goes to the astrologers, and gives the particulars of his nativity, in order to learn whether he shall have good luck or no. Sometimes they will say *No*, and in that case the journey is put off till such day as the astrologer may recommend. These astrologers are very skilful at their business, and often their words come to pass, so the people have great faith in them.

There is another thing I must tell you. It is the custom for every burgess of this city, and in fact for every description of person in it, to write over his door his own name, the name of his wife, and those of his children, his slaves, and all the inmates of his house, and also the number of animals that he keeps. And if any one dies in the house then the name of that person is erased, and if any child is born its name is added. So in this way the Sovereign is able to know exactly the population of the city.

There exists in this city the palace of the King who

fied, him who was Emperor of Manzi, and that is the greatest palace in the world, as I shall tell you more particularly. For you must know its demesne hath a compass of ten miles, all enclosed with lofty battlemented walls; and inside the walls are the finest and most delectable gardens upon the earth, and filled too with the finest fruits. There are numerous fountains in it also, and lakes full of fish. In the middle is the palace itself, a great and splendid building. It contains twenty great and handsome halls, one of which is more spacious than the rest, and affords room for a vast multitude to dine. It is all painted in gold, with many histories and representations of beasts and birds, of knights and dames, and many marvellous things. It forms a really magnificent spectacle, for over all the walls and all the ceiling you can see nothing but paintings in gold. And besides these halls the palace contains one thousand large and handsome chambers, all painted in gold and divers colours.

The position of the city is such that it has on one side a lake of fresh and exquisitely clear water (already spoken of), and on the other a very large river. The waters of the latter fill a number of canals of all sizes which run through the different quarters of the city, carry away all impurities, and then enter the lake, whence they issue again and flow to the Ocean, thus producing a most excellent atmosphere. By means of these channels, as well as by the streets, you can go all about the city. But the streets and canals are so wide and spacious that carts on the one and boats on the other can readily pass to and fro, conveying necessary supplies to the inhabitants.

At the opposite side the city is shut in by a channel, perhaps forty miles in length, very wide, and full of water derived from the river aforesaid, which was made by the ancient kings of the country, in order to relieve the river when flooding its banks. This serves also as a defence to

the city, and the earth dug from it has been thrown inwards, forming a kind of mound enclosing the city.

In this part are the ten principal markets, though besides these there are a vast number of others in the different parts of the town. The former are all squares of half a mile to the side, and along their front passes the main street, which is forty paces in width, and runs straight from end to end of the city, crossing many bridges of easy and commodious approach. At every four miles of its length comes one of those great squares of two miles in compass. In each of the squares is held a market three days in the week, frequented by forty or fifty thousand persons, who bring thither for sale every possible necessary of life, so that there is always an ample supply of every kind of meat and game, and of ducks and geese an infinite quantity.

Those markets make a daily display of every kind of vegetables and fruits; and among the latter there are in particular certain pears of enormous size, weighing as much as ten pounds apiece, and the pulp of which is white and fragrant like a confection; besides peaches in their season both yellow and white, of every delicate flavour.

From the Ocean Sea also come daily supplies of fish in great quantity. Any one who should see the supply of fish in the market would suppose it impossible that such a quantity could ever be sold; and yet in a few hours the whole shall be cleared away; so great is the number of inhabitants who are accustomed to delicate living. Indeed, they eat fish and flesh at the same meal.

To give you an example of the vast consumption in this city, let us take the article of *pepper*; and that will enable you in some measure to estimate what must be the quantity of victual, such as meat, wine, groceries, which have to be provided for the general consumption. Now Messer Marco heard it stated by one of the Great Kaan's officers of customs, that the quantity of pepper introduced daily for

consumption into the city of Kinsay amounted to forty-three loads, each load being equal to two hundred and twenty-three pounds.

The natives of the city are men of peaceful character, both from education and from the example of their kings, whose disposition was the same. They know nothing of handling arms, and keep none in their houses. You hear of no feuds or noisy quarrels or dissensions of any kind among them. Both in their commercial dealings and in their manufactures they are thoroughly honest and truthful, and there is such a degree of good-will and neighbourly attachment among both men and women that you would take the people who live in the same street to be all one family.

They treat the foreigners who visit them for the sake of trade with great cordiality, and entertain them in the most winning manner, affording them every help and advice on their business. But on the other hand they hate to see soldiers, and not least those of the Great Kaan's garrisons, regarding them as the cause of their having lost their native kings and lords.

On the lake of which we have spoken there are numbers of boats and barges of all sizes for parties of pleasure. These will hold ten, fifteen, twenty, or more persons, and are from fifteen to twenty paces in length, with flat bottoms and ample breadth of beam, so that they always keep their trim. Any one who desires to go a-pleasuring hires one of these barges, which are always to be found completely furnished with tables and chairs and all the other apparatus for a feast. The roof forms a level deck, on which the crew stand, and pole the boat along whithersoever may be desired, for the lake is not more than two paces in depth. The inside of this roof and the rest of the interior is covered with ornamental painting in gay colours, with windows all round that can be shut or opened, so that the party at table

can enjoy all the beauty and variety of the prospects on both sides as they pass along. And truly a trip on this lake is a much more charming recreation than can be enjoyed on land. For on the one side lies the city in its entire length, so that the spectators in the barges, from the distance at which they stand, take in the whole prospect in its full beauty and grandeur, with its numberless palaces, temples, monasteries, and gardens, full of lofty trees, sloping to the shore. And the lake is never without a number of other such boats, laden with pleasure parties; for it is the great delight of the citizens here, after they have disposed of the day's business, to pass the afternoon in enjoyment with the ladies of their families, either in these barges or in driving about the city in carriages.

Of these latter we must also say something, for they afford one mode of recreation to the citizens in going about the town, as the boats afford another in going about the lake. In the main street of the city you meet an infinite succession of these carriages passing to and fro. They are long covered vehicles, fitted with curtains and cushions, and affording room for six persons; and they are in constant request for ladies and gentlemen going on parties of pleasure. In these they drive to certain gardens, where they are entertained by the owners in pavilions erected on purpose, and there they divert themselves the livelong day, returning home in the evening in those same carriages.

SILVER ISLAND. [*To face p.* 210.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EXCURSION TO CIPANGO, OR JAPAN — INGENIOUS SHIPS BUILT BY THE CHINESE—THE KHAN FAILS TO CONQUER JAPAN—THE RHINOCEROS—HISTORY OF SAGAMONI BORCAN, OR BUDDHA—RELIQUES OF ADAM.

WE have already seen that the first accounts ever written of the countries lying to the south and east of China were the work of Marco Polo. But he did not personally visit all these regions; and we must be careful not to forget this when reading his account of the islands of the Indian Archipelago, concerning which he wrote from the reports given him by men who had recently come from those parts. It should also be borne in mind that the people of Europe knew almost nothing of the remote parts of the world so described by Polo. Only vague and misty reports from India had come to Europe when Marco was writing his book. And considering that the information given us by the great Venetian was so derived, it must be admitted that it is all very full and very accurate. He prefaces his account of the "Isles of India" thus:

Having finished our discourse concerning those countries wherewith our Book hath been occupied thus far, we are

now about to enter on the subject of INDIA, and to tell you of all the wonders thereof.

And first let us speak of the ships in which merchants go to and fro amongst the Isles of India.

These ships, you must know, are of fir timber. They have but one deck, though each of them contains some fifty or sixty cabins, wherein the merchants abide greatly at their ease, every man having one to himself. The ship hath but one rudder, but it hath four masts; and sometimes they have two additional masts, which they ship and unship at pleasure.

Moreover, the larger of their vessels have some thirteen compartments or severances in the interior, made with planking strongly framed, in case mayhap the ship should spring a leak, either by running on a rock or by the blow of a hungry whale, as shall betide ofttimes; for when the ship in her course by night sends a ripple back alongside of the whale, the creature seeing the foam fancies there is something to eat afloat, and makes a rush forward, whereby it often shall stave in some part of the ship. In such case the water that enters the leak flows to the bilge, which is always kept clear; and the mariners having ascertained where the damage is, empty the cargo from that compartment into those adjoining, for the planking is so well fitted that the water cannot pass from one compartment to another. They then stop the leak and replace the lading.

The fastenings are all of good iron nails and the sides are double, one plank laid over the other, and caulked outside and in. The planks are not pitched, for those people do not have any pitch, but they daub the sides with another matter, deemed by them far better than pitch; it is this: You see they take some lime and some chopped hemp, and these they knead together with a certain wood-oil; and when the three are thoroughly amalgamated, they hold like any glue. And with this mixture they do pay their ships.

Each of their great ships requires at least two hundred mariners, some of them three hundred. They are indeed of great size, for one ship shall carry five or six thousand baskets of pepper, and they used formerly to be larger than they are now. And aboard these ships, you must know, when there is no wind they use sweeps, and these sweeps are so big that to pull them requires four mariners to each. Every great ship has certain large barks or tenders attached to it; these are large enough to carry one thousand baskets of pepper, and carry fifty or sixty mariners apiece, some of them eighty or a hundred, and they are likewise moved by oars; they assist the great ship by towing her, at such times as her sweeps are in use, or even when she is under sail, if the wind be somewhat on the beam—not if the wind be astern, for then the sails of the big ship would take the wind out of those of the tenders, and she would run them down. Each ship has two or three of these barks, but one is bigger than the others. There are also some ten small boats for the service of each great ship, to lay out the anchors, catch fish, bring supplies aboard, and the like. When the ship is under sail she carries these boats slung to her sides. And the large tenders have their boats in like manner.

When the ship has been a year in work and they wish to repair her, they nail on a third plank over the first two, and caulk and pay it well; and when another repair is wanted they nail on yet another plank, and so on year by year as it is required. Howbeit, they do this only for a certain number of years, and till there are six thicknesses of planking. When a ship has come to have six planks on her sides, one over the other, they take her no more on the high seas, but make use of her for coasting as long as she will last, and then they break her up.

Now that I have told you about the ships which sail upon the Ocean Sea and among the Isles of India, let us

proceed to speak of the various wonders of India; but first and foremost I must tell you about a number of Islands that there are in that part of the Ocean Sea where we now are—I mean the Islands lying to the eastward. So let us begin with an Island which is called Chipangu.

The ships of the Great Khan were better for navigation in distant seas than those of Europe were in Marco's time. They were better than the vessels with which Columbus crossed the Atlantic and discovered the coast of America. But the Chinese have made no progress since that day. They build their junks, as they are called, just as they did one thousand years ago. Still, it is to be noted that the Mongols, or Chinese, invented and used water-tight compartments in ships; and our modern ship-builders have copied the Chinese in this respect at least, even although the Chinese have not invented anything of importance to mariners since then.

Now let us see what Marco has to say about Japan; for that is the country which he names Chipangu, and which was variously known afterwards, in those days of spelling by sound, as Cipango, Zipangu, and Zumpango.

Marco is describing to us the countries subject to the Great Khan; and Cipango was interesting to him because Kublai Khan had lately sent an expedition against it. He says:

Chipangu is an Island towards the east in the high seas,

fifteen hundred miles distant from the Continent; and a very great Island it is.

The people are white, civilised, and well-favoured. They are Idolaters, and are dependent on nobody. And I can tell you the quantity of gold they have is endless; for they find it in their own Islands, and the King does not allow it to be exported. Moreover, few merchants visit this country because it is so far from the mainland, and thus it comes to pass that their gold is abundant beyond all measure.

I will tell you a wonderful thing about the Palace of the Lord of that Island. You must know that he hath a great Palace which is entirely roofed with fine gold, just as our churches are roofed with lead, insomuch that it would scarcely be possible to estimate its value. Moreover, all the pavement of the Palace and the floors of the chambers are entirely of gold, in plates like slabs of stone, a good two fingers thick; and the windows also are of gold; so that altogether the richness of this Palace is past all bounds and all belief.

They have also pearls in abundance, which are of a rose colour, but fine, big, and round, and quite as valuable as the white ones. In this Island some of the dead are buried, and others are burnt. When a body is burnt, they put one of these pearls in the mouth, for such is their custom. They have also quantities of other precious stones.

Cublay, the Grand Kaan who now reigneth, having heard much of the immense wealth that was in this Island, formed a plan to get possession of it. For this purpose he sent two of his Barons with a great navy, and a great force of horse and foot. These Barons were able and valiant men, one of them called ABACAN and the other VONSAINCHIN, and they weighed with all their company from the ports of Zayton and Kinsay, and put out to sea.

They sailed until they reached the Island aforesaid, and there they landed, and occupied the open country and the villages, but did not succeed in getting possession of any city or castle.

Marco Polo next proceeds to explain why the army of the Great Khan did not succeed in conquering the kingdom of Cipango. He says, that there was a bitter jealousy existing between the two Barons in command of the expedition, "so that one would do nothing to help the other." Consequently, when a storm arose, the fleet was scattered and a great many of the vessels were lost. About thirty thousand men took refuge on an uninhabited island, and when fair weather came again the Emperor of Cipango sent a fleet to take these fugitives. By some stratagem, according to Marco Polo's account, the invaders got possession of the ships of the enemy and set sail for Cipango; and advancing upon the chief city of the empire under the banners of the absent forces of the Emperor, they gained possession of the capital, and were subsequently besieged there by the forces of the rightful government of the country. After holding out for seven months, the invaders surrendered on condition that their lives should be spared and that they should never leave the island.

Among the other remarkable things told of Cipango, by those who gave this information to Marco Polo, was, that eight of the garrison of one of the fortifi-

cations taken by the Mongols possessed a charm which prevented their captors from cutting off their heads, as had been attempted. This charm consisted of certain stones inserted under the skin of their flesh, "and the virtue of these stones was such that those who wore them could never perish by steel. So when the Barons heard of this they ordered the men to be beaten to death with clubs. And after their death the stones were extracted from the bodies of all, and were highly prized." In Marco's time, and indeed up to a very recent period, charms of this sort were common among partly civilised nations.

It was this part of Marco's story that was greatly disbelieved in Europe, when he returned to tell of the wonders he had seen in the Far East. Possibly, his account of the marvellous adventures of the Khan's generals in Cipango threw doubt on his whole story. The expedition was a failure, and it is likely that each of the leaders attempted to put the blame upon the other: the result was a long and curious tale of adventure, which, although you may some day like to read it for yourselves, need not be told here.

But the marvels of the fabled island of Cipango took strong hold of the European imagination after a while. As we have already said, Columbus expected to reach India and Cathay by sailing westward, and one of the objects of his search was the rich island of Cipango. When he happened on those islands which

he called mistakenly the West Indies, he was afraid that he had missed Cipango, and he asked the natives where the land of gold (Cipango) was situated ; when they pointed to the south, he made up his mind that he had sailed by the northern point of Cipango and had fallen upon one of the Indian islands. Later on, in 1498, after the discovery of America, John Cabot and his son Sebastian sailed on an expedition into the west, and they too were searching for the wealthy island of Cipango, which of course they never found.

Marco gives glowing accounts of the great maritime cities of Kinsay and Zayton, on the eastern and south-eastern coast of China. Hangchau is the modern name of Kinsay, which, in Marco's time, was a port of the very first importance. It is the capital of Chinkiang. Zayton, which lies south of Hangchau, and is now known as Chinchau, or Tsinchau, was the port from which the Khan's fleets sailed for the capture of Japan ; and from that port also sailed Marco Polo and his father and uncle on their final return to Europe, when they took with them the bride of the Persian Khan. The city was famous, among other things, for a peculiar, rich, and glossy silk, which was called *satin*, from a change of the name, Zayton, or Zaituni, where it was made and exported. In the same way, calico takes its name from the Indian city Calicut, and cambric from

Cambrai. Kinsay and Zayton were also objects of Columbus' search on his first and second voyages.

Another region in the eastern archipelago noted by Marco is Cochin China, which he calls Chamba. Cochin China was conquered by the Great Khan, and Marco visited the country in 1285, he says. At that time, according to Marco Polo, the king had a great many wives; and he also had, "between sons and daughters, three hundred and twenty-six children, of whom at least one hundred and fifty were men fit to carry arms." Of the productions of the country he writes:

> There are very great numbers of elephants in this kingdom, and they have lignaloes in great abundance. They have also extensive forests of the wood called *Bonús*, which is jet black, and of which chessmen and pen-cases are made.

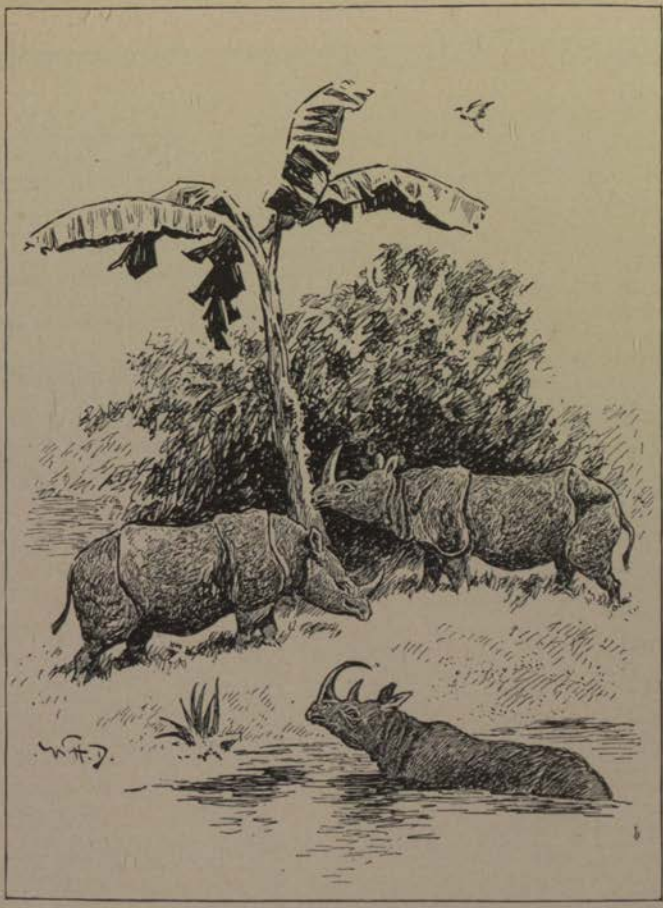
Elephants are still very numerous in Cochin China; and ebony, the jet-black wood of which Marco speaks, is also brought from there. We must understand that lignaloes is the antique name for aloes-wood—a vegetable product from which is prepared the drug known in medicine as aloes.

The other countries mentioned by Marco are Java, of which he gives a very meagre account; Sumatra, which he calls "Java the Less"; and divers other islands, which are difficult for us now to identify on

the modern map. Concerning the strange things he saw in Sumatra, Marco says:

This also is an independent kingdom, and the people have a language of their own; but they are just like beasts, without laws or religion. They call themselves subjects of the Great Kaan, but they pay him no tribute; indeed, they are so far away that his men could not go thither. Still, all these Islanders declare themselves to be his subjects, and sometimes they send him curiosities as presents. There are wild elephants in the country, and numerous unicorns, which are very nearly as big. They have hair like that of a buffalo, feet like those of an elephant, and a horn in the middle of the forehead, which is black and very thick. They do no mischief, however, with the horn, but with the tongue alone; for this is covered all over with long and strong prickles, and when savage with any one they crush him under their knees and then rasp him with their tongue. The head resembles that of a wild boar, and they carry it ever bent toward the ground. They delight much to abide in mire and mud. 'Tis a passing ugly beast to look upon. There are also monkeys here in great numbers and of sundry kinds, and goshawks as black as crows. These are very large birds and capital for fowling.

I may tell you, moreover, that when people bring home pygmies which they allege to come from India, 'tis all a lie and a cheat. For those little men, as they call them, are manufactured on this Island, and I will tell you how. You see there is on the Island a kind of monkey which is very small, and has a face just like a man's. They take these, and pluck out all the hair except the hair of the beard and on the breast, and then they dry them and stuff them and daub them with saffron and other things until they look like men. But you see it is all a cheat; for nowhere in



THE THREE ASIATIC RHINOCEROSES: INDIAN (UPPER), SUMATRAN (LOWER), JAVANESE (MIDDLE).

[*To face p.* 220.

India nor anywhere else in the world were there ever men seen so small as these pretended pygmies.

Marco confounds the rhinoceros with the fabulous unicorn, as many other writers of the olden time have done. The unicorn, which is represented as "fighting for the crown" with the lion, was something like the horse, with a single horn in his forehead. There was no such creature; but the rhinoceros, then very little known, was mistaken for the unicorn. The Sumatra rhinoceros, however, usually has two horns; it is the Indian beast of this family that has but one horn. If Marco Polo had with his own eyes seen the so-called unicorn of Sumatra, he doubtless would have been very much puzzled.

Marco then makes us shudder by relating a horrible practice, in which the people of Dagroian indulged (their island was close to Sumatra):

I will tell you a wicked custom of theirs. When one of them is ill they send for their sorcerers, and put the question to them, whether the sick man shall recover of his sickness or no. If they say that he will recover, then they let him alone till he gets better. But if the sorcerers foretell that the sick man is to die, the friends send for certain judges of theirs to put to death him who has thus been condemned by the sorcerers to die. These men come, and lay so many clothes upon the sick man's mouth that they suffocate him. And when he is dead they have him cooked, and gather together all the dead man's kin, and eat him. And when they have eaten him, they collect his bones and

put them in fine chests, and carry them away, and place them in caverns among the mountains where no beast nor other creature can get at them. And you must know also that if they take prisoner a man of another country, and he cannot pay a ranson in coin, they kill him and eat him straightway. It is a very evil custom and a parlous.

When Marco gets to Ceylon (which he calls Seilan), he narrates the history of Sagamoni Borcan, or Buddha, and of the beginning of idolatry.

You must know that in the Island of Seilan there is an exceeding high mountain; it rises right up so steep and precipitous that no one could ascend it, were it not that they have taken and fixed to it several great and massive iron chains, so disposed that, by help of these, men are able to mount to the top. And I tell you they say that on this mountain is the sepulchre of Adam our first parent; at least that is what the Saracens say. But the Idolaters say that it is the sepulchre of Sagamoni Borcan, before whose time there were no idols. They hold him to have been the best of men, a great saint in fact, according to their fashion, and the first in whose name idols were made.

He was the son, as their story goes, of a great and wealthy King. And he was of such an holy temper that he would never listen to any worldly talk, nor would he consent to be king. And when the father saw that his son would not be king, nor yet take any part in affairs, he took it sorely to heart. And first he tried to tempt him with great promises, offering to crown him king, and to surrender all authority into his hands. The son, however, would none of his offers; so the father was in great trouble, and all the more that he had no other son but him, to whom he might bequeath the kingdom at his own death. So, after

taking thought on the matter, the King caused a great palace to be built, and placed his son therein, and caused him to be waited on there by a number of maidens, the most beautiful that could anywhere be found. And he ordered them to divert themselves with the Prince, and to sing and dance before him, so as to draw his heart towards worldly enjoyments. But 'twas all of no avail. And I assure you he was so staid a youth that he had never gone out of the palace, and thus he had never seen a dead man, nor any one who was not hale and sound; for the father never allowed any man that was aged or infirm to come into his presence. It came to pass, however, one day that the young gentleman took a ride, and by the roadside he beheld a dead man. The sight dismayed him greatly, as he never had seen such a sight before. Incontinently he demanded of those who were with him what thing that was, and they told him it was a dead man. "How, then," quoth the King's son, "do all men die?" "Yea, forsooth," said they. Whereupon the young gentleman said never a word, but rode on right pensively. And after he had ridden a good way he fell in with a very aged man who could no longer walk, and had not a tooth in his head, having lost all because of his great age. And when the King's son beheld this old man, he asked what that might mean, and wherefore the man could not walk. Those who were with him replied that it was through old age the man could walk no longer and had lost all his teeth. And so when the King's son had thus learned about the dead man and about the aged man, he turned back to his palace and said to himself that he would abide no longer in this evil world, but would go in search of Him Who dieth not and Who had created him.

So what did he one night but take his departure from the palace privily, and betake himself to certain lofty and pathless mountains. And there he did abide, leading a life of great hardship and sanctity, and keeping great abstinence, just as

if he had been a Christian. And when he died, they found his body and brought it to his father. And when the father saw dead before him that son whom he loved better than himself, he was near going distraught with sorrow. And he caused an image in the similitude of his son to be wrought in gold and precious stones, and caused all his people to adore it. And they all declared him to be a god; and so they still say.

They tell, moreover, that he hath died fourscore and four times. The first time he died as a man, and came to life again as an ox; and then he died as an ox and came to life again as a horse, and so on until he had died fourscore and four times; and every time he became some kind of animal. But when he died the eighty-fourth time they say he became a god. And they do hold him for the greatest of all their gods. And they tell that the aforesaid image of him was the first idol that the Idolaters ever had; and from that have originated all the other idols. And this befell in the Island of Seilan in India.

The Idolaters come thither on pilgrimage from very long distances and with great devotion; and they maintain that the monument on the mountain is that of the King's son, according to the story I have been telling you; and that the teeth, and the hair, and the dish that are there, were those of the same King's son, whose name was Sagamoni Borcan, or Sagamoni the Saint. But the Saracens also come thither on pilgrimage in great numbers, and *they* say that it is the sepulchre of Adam our first father, and that the teeth, and the hair, and the dish were those of Adam.

Whose they were in truth God knoweth; howbeit, according to the Holy Scripture of our Church, the sepulchre of Adam is not in that part of the world.

Now it befell that the Great Kaan heard how on that mountain there was the sepulchre of our first father Adam, and that some of his hair and of his teeth, and the dish from

which he used to eat, were still preserved there. So he thought he would get hold of them somehow or another, and despatched a great embassy for the purpose, in the year of Christ 1284. The ambassadors, with a great company, travelled on by sea and by land until they arrived at the Island of Seilan, and presented themselves before the King. And they were so urgent with him that they succeeded in getting two of the grinder teeth, which were passing great and thick; and they also got some of the hair, and the dish from which that personage used to eat, which is of a very beautiful green porphyry. And when the Great Kaan's ambassadors had attained the object for which they had come they were greatly rejoiced, and returned to their Lord. And when they drew near to the great city of Cambaluc, where the Great Kaan was staying, they sent him word that they had brought back that for which he had sent them. On learning this, the Great Kaan was passing glad, and ordered all the ecclesiastics and others to go forth to meet these reliques, which he was led to believe were those of Adam.

And why should I make a long story of it? In sooth, the whole population of Cambaluc went forth to meet those reliques, and the eccelesiastics took them over and carried them to the Great Kaan, who received them with great joy and reverence. And they find it written in their Scriptures that the virtue of that dish is such that if food for one man be put therein it shall become enough for five men; and the Great Kaan averred that he had proved the thing and found that it was really true.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WONDERS OF INDIA—PEARL-FISHERS AND THEIR PERILS—A STORY LIKE ONE IN "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS"—HUNTING DIAMONDS WITH EAGLES.

MARCO'S description of the pearl-fishery of Ceylon is not only very interesting, but also truthful. The general features of the pearl-fishery of to-day are the same as in his time. The region, to which Marco gives the name of "Maabar," is probably that which we now know as the Coromandel coast. The point which he calls "Bettelar" is undoubtedly Patlam, on the coast of Ceylon. The shark-charmers, of whom Marco speaks, are still in existence. They pretend to be able to charm the sharks so that the latter will not attack the divers. The secret of this charm is usually bequeathed from father to son, and never goes out of the family; and it is believed by everybody, including foreigners, that these shark-charmers do really keep away the sharks. Marco says:

When you leave the Island of Seilan and sail westward about sixty miles, you come to the great Province of

MAABAR, which is styled INDIA THE GREATER; it is the best of all the Indies, and is on the mainland.

In this Province there are five kings, who are own brothers. I will tell you about each in turn. The Province is the finest and noblest in the world.

At this end of the Province reigns one of those five Royal Brothers, who is a crowned King, and his name is SONDER BANDI DAVAR. In this kingdom they find very fine and great pearls; and I will tell you how they are got.

The sea here forms a gulf between the Island of Seilan and the mainland. And all round this gulf the water has a depth of no more than ten or twelve fathoms, and in some places no more than two fathoms. The pearl-fishers take their vessels, great and small, and proceed into this gulf, where they stop from the beginning of April till the middle of May. They go first to a place called BETTELAR, and then go sixty miles into the gulf. Here they cast anchor and shift from their large vessels into small boats. The merchants divide into various companies, and each of these must engage a number of men on wages, hiring them for April and half of May. Of all the produce they have first to pay the King, as his royalty, the tenth part. And they must also pay those men who charm the great fishes, to prevent them from injuring the divers whilst engaged in seeking pearls under water, one twentieth part of all that they take. These fish-charmers are termed *Abraiaman*; and their charm holds good for that day only, for at night they dissolve the charm so that the fishes can work mischief at their will. These Abraiaman know also how to charm beasts and birds and every living thing. When the men have got into the small boats they jump into the water and dive to the bottom, which may be at a depth of from four to twelve fathoms, and there they remain as long as they are able. And there they find the shells that contain the pearls, and these they put into a net bag tied

round the waist, and mount up to the surface with them, and then dive anew. When they can't hold their breath any longer they come up again, and after a little down they go once more, and so they go on all day. These shells are in fashion like oysters or sea-hoods. And in these shells are found pearls, great and small, of every kind, sticking in the flesh of the shell-fish.

In this manner pearls are fished in great quantities, for thence in fact come the pearls which are spread all over the world. And the King of that State hath a very great receipt and treasure from his dues upon those pearls.

Now we come to a marvellous tale of diamonds, and the way they are obtained, which sounds so much like a chapter out of "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments" that we must copy it entire. Marco says that, after one leaves Maabar and travels about one thousand miles in a northerly direction, one comes to the kingdom of Mutfili. No such kingdom now exists, and it is supposed that by this was meant Motupallé, in the Madras Presidency. It was in Mutfili that the Golconda diamonds were found; and this is the tale told to Marco of the finding of them:

It is in this kingdom that diamonds are got; and I will tell you how. There are certain lofty mountains in those parts; and when the winter rains fall, which are very heavy, the waters come roaring down the mountains in great torrents. When the rains are over, and the waters from the mountains have ceased to flow, they search the beds of the torrents and find plenty of diamonds. In summer also there

are plenty to be found in the mountains, but the heat of the sun is so great that it is scarcely possible to go thither, nor is there then a drop of water to be found. Moreover, in those mountains great serpents are rife to a marvellous degree, besides other vermin, and this owing to the great heat. The serpents are also the most venomous in existence, insomuch that any one going to that region runs fearful peril; for many have been destroyed by these evil reptiles.

Now among these mountains there are certain great and deep valleys, to the bottom of which there is no access. Wherefore the men who go in search of the diamonds take with them pieces of flesh, as lean as they can get, and these they cast into the bottom of the valley. Now there are numbers of white eagles that haunt those mountains and feed upon the serpents. When the eagles see the meat thrown down they pounce upon it, and carry it up to some rocky hill-top where they begin to rend it. But there are men on the watch, and as soon as they see that the eagles have settled they raise a loud shouting to drive them away. And when the eagles are thus frightened away the men recover the pieces of meat, and find them full of diamonds which have stuck to the meat down in the bottom. For the abundance of diamonds down there in the depths of the valleys is astonishing, but nobody can get down; and if one could, it would be only to be incontinently devoured by the serpents which are so rife there.

There is also another way of getting the diamonds. The people go to the nests of those white eagles, of which there are many, and find plenty of diamonds which the birds have swallowed in devouring the meat that was cast into the valleys. And when the eagles themselves are taken, diamonds are found in their stomachs.

So now I have told you three different ways in which these stones are found. No other country but this kingdom

of Mutfili produces them, but there they are found both abundantly and of large size. Those that are brought to our part of the world are only the refuse, as it were, of the finer and larger stones. For the flower of the diamonds and other large gems, as well as the largest pearls, are all carried to the Great Kaan and other Kings and Princes of those regions; in truth, they possess all the great treasures of the world.

The story of the eagles and the diamonds is one of the oldest in literature. You will find it in the adventures of Sindbad the Sailor, in "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments"; and as it is very unlikely that Marco Polo ever saw that book, which had not been translated in his time, we may assume that his story and that of Sindbad had a common origin among the Persians; for it appears in Persian, Chinese, Arabian, Jewish, and other Oriental legends. In Herodotus, too, we find a similar narrative, only the substance got in this indirect way is cinnamon; and the Arabs procured it by a kindred device.

CHAPTER XXII.

A PEEP INTO AFRICA—THE MYTHICAL ROC AND ITS MIGHTY EGGS—THE EXPLOITS OF KING CAIDU'S DAUGHTER—CONCLUSION.

THE eastern coast of Africa was an unknown region in Marco Polo's day; and when he had travelled so far to the southern end of Asia that he began to get glimpses of Africa, he could not believe that he heard reports from the eastern side of the African Continent, of which he already knew something, as it formed the southern border of the Mediterranean Sea. So he speaks of Madagascar (which he calls Madeigascar) and Zanzibar (which he calls Zanghibar) as though they were parts of India. If we remember that Marco was the first writer, European or Asiatic, to mention Madagascar by that name, and almost the first to give the world any information concerning that unknown land, we may overlook the fact that his geography is sometimes mixed. But his descriptions of the people and the animals of Eastern Africa are pretty accurate, as thus:

They are all black, and go naked, with only a little covering for decency. Their hair is as black as pepper, and

so frizzly that even with water you can scarcely straighten it. And their mouths are so large, their noses so turned up, their lips so thick, their eyes so big and blood-shot, that they look like very devils; they are, in fact, so hideously ugly tha the world has nothing to show more horrible.

There are also lions that are black and quite different from ours. And their sheep are all exactly alike in colour—the

body all white and the head black; no other kind of sheep is found there, you may rest assured. They have also many giraffes. This is a beautiful creature, and I must give you a description of it. Its body is short and somewhat sloped to the rear, for its hind legs are short, whilst the fore legs and the neck are both very long, and thus its head stands about three paces from the ground. The head is small, and the animal is not at all mischievous. Its colour is all red and white in round spots, and it is really a beautiful object.

The women of this Island are the ugliest in the world, with their great mouths and big eyes and thick noses. The people live on rice and flesh and milk and dates; and they make wine of dates and of rice and of good spices and sugar. There is a great deal of trade, and many merchants and vessels go thither.

To Abyssinia, which he calls Abash, Marco devotes a few pages, where we find that branding in the face with a hot iron forms part of the rite of baptism among the Abyssinian Christians:

The Christians in this country bear three marks on the face; one from the forehead to the middle of the nose, and one on either cheek. These marks are made with a hot iron, and form part of their baptism; for after that they have been baptised with water, these three marks are made, partly as a token of *gentility*, and partly as the completion of their baptism. There are also Jews in the country, and these bear two marks, one on either cheek; and the Saracens have but one, to wit, on the forehead, extending half-way down the nose.

It was somewhere in Eastern Africa that Marco heard of the existence of that marvellous and gigantic bird, the Roc. Stories like this, no doubt, served to shake the faith of the Venetians in the truth of the tales of the Polos when they returned to their native land. Marco gives us the tale here with some "grains of salt," as you will see:

You must know that this Island lies so far south that ships cannot go further south or visit other Islands in that

direction, except this one and that other of which we have to tell you, called Zanghibar. This is because the sea-current runs so strong towards the south that the ships which should attempt it never would get back again. Indeed, the ships of Maabar which visit this Island of Madeigascar, and that other of Zanghibar, arrive thither with marvellous speed, for great as the distance is they accomplish it in twenty days, whilst the return voyage takes them more than three months. This is because of the strong current running south, which continues with such singular force and in the same direction at all seasons.

'Tis said that in those other Islands to the south, which the ships are unable to visit because this strong current prevents their return, is found the bird *Gryphon*, which appears there at certain seasons. The description given of it is, however, entirely different from what our stories and pictures make it. For persons who had been there and had seen it told Messer Marco Polo that it was for all the world like an eagle, but one indeed of enormous size; so big, in fact, that its wings covered an extent of thirty paces, and its quills were twelve paces long, and thick in proportion. And it is so strong that it will seize an elephant in its talons and carry him high into the air, and drop him so that he is smashed to pieces; having so killed him, the bird gryphon swoops down upon him and eats him at leisure. The people of those isles call the bird *Ruc*, and it has no other name. So I wot not if this be the real gryphon, or if there be another manner of bird as great. But this I can tell you for certain, that they are not half lion and half bird, as our stories do relate; but enormous as they be, they are fashioned just like an eagle.

The Great Kaan sent to those parts to inquire about these curious matters, and the story was told by those who went thither. He also sent to procure the release of an envoy of his who had been despatched thither, and had

THE ROC.

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been detained; so both those envoys had many wonderful things to tell the Great Kaan about those strange islands, and about the birds I have just mentioned. They brought (as I heard) to the Great Kaan a feather of the said Ruc, which was stated to measure ninety spans, whilst the quill part was two palms in circumference—a marvellous object! The Great Kaan was delighted with it, and gave great presents to those who brought it. They also brought two boar's tusks, which weighed more than fourteen pounds a piece; and you may gather how big the boar must have been that had teeth like that! They related, indeed, that there were some of these boars as big as a great buffalo. There are also numbers of giraffes and wild asses; and, in fact, a marvellous number of wild beasts of strange aspect.

The measurements, which were common in Marco Polo's time, are not much in use nowadays; but if the reader wants to figure out the dimensions of Marco's big bird, a pace may be reckoned as equal to two and a half feet, a span to nine inches, and a palm to four inches.

The fable of the Rukh, or Roc, is one of the oldest in the world—as old as that other which relates the adventures of the men who got their diamonds from the valley of the serpents in such curious fashion; and we find it in the story of Sindbad the Sailor. But scientific research has proved that some such colossal bird did exist in ancient times. There have been found in Madagascar the remains of an immense bird, and also a fossil egg of the monster. This egg, which is in the British Museum, is thirteen and a

quarter inches long and six and a half inches in diameter; its contents would be equal to two and a half gallons. If the bird were constructed on the plan of the eagle, for instance, its egg, comparing it with that of the eagle, would require a bird so big that its quills would be ten feet long and its wings would spread over thirty feet.

In New Zealand have been found the bones of a great bird called the Moa by the natives; this was a lazy and stupid creature, incapable of flying, and not unlike the ostrich in structure and habit. The Moa (*Dinornis*, as it is named by the scientists) was over ten feet high. Not long since, there were found, alongside of the remains of a Moa, the bones of a still bigger bird which resembled the eagle, and was evidently a bird of prey twice as big as the Moa. If this creature lived on the Moa as its prey, why may not some other gigantic bird, like the Roc, have preyed on the great bird whose egg and bones were found in Madagascar?

The next succeeding chapters of Marco Polo's book are taken up chiefly with accounts of the wars of Kublai Khan, beginning with the battle fought between him and his mutinous nephew, the King of Caidu. With these we need not concern ourselves, though the exploits of Caidu's valiant daughter, described in Marco's quaint language, are worth notice:

Now you must know that King Caidu had a daughter whose name was Aijaruc, which in the Tartar is as much as to say "The Bright Moon." This damsel was very beautiful, but also so strong and brave that in all her father's realm there was no man who could outdo her in feats of strength. In all trials she showed greater strength than any man of them.

Her father often desired to give her in marriage, but she would none of it. She vowed she would never marry till she found a man who could vanquish her in every trial; him she would wed, and none else. And when her father saw how resolute she was, he gave a formal consent in their fashion that she should marry whom she list and when she list. The lady was so tall and muscular, so stout and shapely withal, that she was almost like a giantess. She had distributed her challenges over all the kingdoms, declaring that whosoever should come to try a fall with her, it should be on these conditions, *viz.* that if she vanquished him she should win from him one hundred horses, and if he vanquished her he should win her to wife. Hence many a noble youth had come to try his strength against her, but she beat them all; and in this way she had won more than ten thousand horses.

Now it came to pass in the year of Christ 1280, that there presented himself a noble young gallant, the son of a rich and puissant king, a man of prowess and valiance and great strength of body, who had heard word of the damsel's challenge, and came to match himself against her in the hope of vanquishing her and winning her to wife. That he greatly desired, for the young lady was passing fair. He too was young and handsome, fearless and strong in every way, insomuch that not a man in all his father's realm could vie with him. So he came full confidently, and brought with him one thousand horses to be forfeited if she should vanquish him. Thus might she gain one thousand horses at

a single stroke! But the young gallant had such confidence in his own strength that he counted securely to win her.

Now ye must know that King Caidu and the Queen his wife, the mother of the stout damsel, did privily beseech their daughter to let herself be vanquished. For they greatly desired this prince for their daughter, seeing what a noble youth he was, and the son of a great king. But the damsel answered that never would she let herself be vanquished if she could help it; if, indeed, he should get the better of her, then she would gladly be his wife, according to the wager, but not otherwise.

So a day was named for a great gathering at the Palace of King Caidu, and the King and Queen were there. And when all the company were assembled, for great numbers flocked to see the match, the damsel first came forth in a strait jerkin of sammet; and then came forth the young bachelor in a jerkin of sendal; and a winsome sight they were to see. When both had taken post in the middle of the hall, they grappled each other by the arms, and wrestled this way and that, but for a long time neither could get the better of the other. At last, however, it so befell that the damsel threw him right valiantly on the palace pavement. And when he found himself thus thrown, and her standing over him, great indeed was his shame and discomfiture. He gat him up straightway, and without more ado departed with all his company, and returned to his father full of shame and vexation, that he who had never yet found a man that could stand before him should have been thus worsted by a girl! And his one thousand horses he left behind him.

As to King Caidu and his wife, they were greatly annoyed, as I can tell you; for if they had had their will, this youth should have won their daughter.

And ye must know that after this her father never went on a campaign but she went with him. And gladly he took her, for not a knight in all his train played such feats of

arms as she did. Sometimes she would quit her father's side, and make a dash at the host of the enemy, and seize some man thereout, as deftly as a hawk pounces on a bird, and carry him to her father; and this she did many a time.

Then Marco skips to the far North, and tells us of the wandering Tatars of that region, and of the manners and customs of Siberia.

His description of the far North made no such profound impression on the mind of Europe as did his account of the countries in the southern and eastern parts of Asia, and it need not detain us.

Now we have come to the end of Marco Polo's book, and cannot better close our extracts from it than with the epilogue, or concluding address, which Rusticiano, or Ramusio, or some of the earliest copyists, put down here as a finish to the whole:

CONCLUSION.

And now ye have heard all that we can tell you about the Tartars and the Saracens and their customs, and likewise about the other countries of the world, as far as our researches and information extend. Only we have said nothing whatever about the GREATER SEA and the provinces that lie round it, although we know it thoroughly. But it seems to me a needless and useless task to speak about places which are visited by people every day. For there are so many who sail all about that sea constantly, Venetians and Genoese and Pisans, and many others, that everybody knows all about it, and that is the reason that I pass it over and say nothing of it.

Of the manner in which we took our departure from the Court of the Great Kaan you have heard at the beginning of the Book, in that chapter where we told you of all the vexation and trouble that Messer Maffeo and Messer Nicolo and Messer Marco had about getting the Great Kaan's leave to go; and in the same chapter is related the lucky chance that led to our departure. And you may be sure that but for that lucky chance we should never have got away in spite of all our trouble, and never have got back to our country again. But I believe it was God's pleasure that we should get back, in order that people might learn about the things that the world contains. For according to what has been said in the introduction at the beginning of the Book there never was a man, be he Christian or Saracen, or Tartar or Heathen, who ever travelled over so much of the world as did that noble and illustrious citizen of the City of Venice, Messer Marco, the son of Messer Nicolo Polo.

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